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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF IDEOGRAPHS IN A
COMMUNITY RELATIONS CAMPAIGN:
THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT MILE ROAD

by

MICHELE ANNE NAJOR

DISSERTATION

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of Wayne State University,

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James Maxwell Feb. 23, 1999
Advisor Date

George Ziegelmüller
Frank G. Leyer
Mary C. Serpock

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Eight Mile Road is the heart of southeast Michigan. This twenty-seven mile stretch of road joins 4.6 million people. From Farmington Hills to Harper Woods, Eight Mile Road connects 13 communities and three counties. To metropolitan Detroiters, however, Eight Mile Road is more than just a roadway or street: it is a racially symbolic marker. Eight Mile Road symbolizes more than two decades of hostility between Detroit and the northern suburbs. Some would even argue that Eight Mile Road separates two worlds: the white from the black, the safe from the unsafe, and the desirable from the undesirable.

These facts are clear. Eight Mile Road separates Detroit politically from the northern suburbs. Demographic profiles indicate that more African-Americans live in Detroit than in the suburbs. Statistics show that crime is more frequent to the south of Eight Mile Road than it is to the north. National and local media coverage suggests that many people believe that Eight Mile Road does indeed divide two worlds.

How did a roadway come to define so much? Is it possible, through a rhetorical redefinition of this powerful symbolic marker, to recapture the sense of community that existed in earlier years? Can these divergent yet different “neighbors” be united in a mutually beneficial relationship? Will Detroit and suburban officials join forces to bring the two together?

Purpose of this Study

This study examines community relations at two levels. A community relations campaign targeted at a section of Eight Mile Road will be evaluated through rhetorical

criticism. This community relations campaign was developed and executed by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA). The 8MBA is a non-profit association formed to address the growing concerns of communities located along the roadway. The study will focus on the portion of Eight Mile Road that separates the cities of Warren and Detroit. More specifically, this portion embraces a six-mile stretch of Eight Mile Road between Dequindre and Hayes roads, and from Seven Mile Road to Nine Mile Road (see fig.1). This section has been targeted for the community relations campaign because it reflects many of the major divisions that separate Detroit from the northern suburbs along the entire length of Eight Mile Road.

Rhetorical criticism will be applied to the language used in the campaign's various communications to analyze the nature of the symbol production process and its effects. A vocabulary of concepts derived from Michael McGee's discussion of the "ideograph" and the link between rhetoric and ideology will be explored. This discussion will also draw from concepts developed by Celeste Condit in her examination of the rhetorical constructions of public morality and from C. Jack Orr's framework of the social construction of reality through communication.

Second, this study will apply traditional public relations analysis and evaluation techniques to the 8MBA's community relations campaign in an attempt to measure its effectiveness. Standard measures such as community feedback sessions and a traditional clipping analysis will serve to indicate perceptions of Eight Mile Road. Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis will serve as a measure of the campaign's overall effectiveness in changing the perceptions of Eight Mile Road through a typical community relations campaign.

Other traditional measures -- such as funds raised and increases in membership and volunteerism -- will also serve as evaluative tools.

The Eight Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA)

In April 1993, officials from several communities located along Eight Mile Road assembled to discuss their growing concerns over the blighting economic influences along their common border. These influences included vacant or burned out buildings, the clutter of billboards and business signs, and the proliferation of adult entertainment businesses. The opening of I-696 to the north significantly reduced traffic along parts of the road. There was further concern over disinvestment and redlining. Eight Mile Road's economic vitality was being threatened.

Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi was particularly instrumental in joining these communities (located in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties) together so that conditions could be improved. With the cooperation of the Oakland County Planning Department, the 13 communities and three counties that border Eight Mile Road and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the 8MBA was developed to oversee these efforts.

The term "Boulevard" was chosen because the greenbelt traffic medians along Eight Mile Road technically qualify it as a boulevard. In addition, this may be considered as an early attempt to change the language when referring to Eight Mile Road.

The 8MBA's goal is to make Eight Mile Road a symbol of how cooperative and unified actions by citizens and government can create a better place to live, work and play for folks on both sides. In 1996, the Board of Directors for the 8MBA held a special

meeting which was facilitated by executives from the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce. The outcome of the meeting produced 8MBA's mission statement. The mission statement is as follows: "The Eight Mile Boulevard Association revitalizes and promotes the Eight Mile transportation, business and residential corridor by linking the efforts of the public and private sectors." And, since 1993, it has been reasonably successful in joining people together to make a difference. The 8MBA has already landscaped one median island, conducted regular litter cleanups, brought together all 17 law enforcement agencies to coordinate police patrols, conducted crime prevention seminars, and developed channels to share information about housing rehabilitation opportunities and resources. The 8MBA's 1997 annual meeting, held in May, featured a silent auction during which it exceeded a fundraising goal of \$3,000 by raising \$4,600. Other accomplishments include the more than \$700,000 the association raised in its first three years of operation.

Sharlan Douglas has served as 8MBA's executive director since its inception. A public relations professional for more than 15 years, she has worked in non-profit management since 1986. Members of the 8MBA include all 13 communities and the three counties which border Eight Mile between I-94 and I-275, plus the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The 13 communities, listed from east to west, are as follows: Harper Woods, Eastpointe, Detroit, Warren, Hazel Park, Ferndale, Royal Oak Township, Oak Park, Southfield, Redford Township, Farmington, Farmington Hills, and Livonia.

In 1998, there were 160 individual members in the 8MBA (Douglas). Membership embraces three categories -- business, civic and individual. The mayors,

township supervisors and top elected county officials serve on the 8MBA board, as does the MDOT director. These 17 voting members govern and determine the course of the 8MBA. The board of directors oversees six standing committees: Administration; Transportation; Member Services; Crime Prevention; Economic Development; and Fundraising.

The Eight Mile Boulevard Association also offers civic and individual associate memberships. These members have no voting power but receive the “Baseline Report” newsletter and the annual report as well as all mailings on special events and activities of the 8MBA that take place throughout the year. These members also receive discounts on special events such as the annual meeting. They may serve on standing committees. The Board of Directors in 1994 agreed on the following four goals:

- * to improve transportation
- * to attract and retain businesses
- * to prevent and reduce the effects of crime
- * to communicate with and about affected audiences

These objectives support the 8MBA's larger goal of raising awareness and changing perceptions about Eight Mile Road.

Funding for the 8MBA comes from member governments' dues, contributions, grants and other fundraising efforts. In 1995, the State of Michigan committed \$20,000 toward 8MBA's large-scale median landscaping project. The money was spent in 1997. Thus far, twelve other donors have given \$24,178 towards the project. The McGregor Fund donation, for example, is a challenge grant that promises \$10,000 to match other

funds. Once 8MBA has raised funds for the gardens, it must generate an additional \$90,000 to erect signs on the median and at the borders of cities and townships.

Eight donors (including Detroit Edison, Comerica Bank, Botsford Hospital and four automobile dealers who co-sponsored two signs) have already qualified as sign sponsors with donations of \$8,000 or more. Each will receive credit on one of the 18 signs that will identify the various cities on either side of Eight Mile Road. The 8MBA believes that new landscaping and signs on the median is one way to link neighboring communities and to make Eight Mile Road more attractive to its 23 million travelers each year.

Additionally, since 1993, more than 30 developments occupying 750,000 square feet have created more than a thousand new jobs along the corridor. A new strip mall was erected in Royal Oak Township on Eight Mile Road at Wyoming. A Home Depot store opened in Southfield on Eight Mile Road near Greenfield. Eastland Mall has expanded its Winkelman's store. Arbor Drugs has opened two new drugstores on Eight Mile Road. The 8MBA's executive director, Sharlan Douglas, credits the small business owners for some of the major redevelopment currently being done along Eight Mile Road. "Most recently, small developers, particularly convenience store owners, have shown great potential as a source of significant redevelopment" (Douglas).

The 8MBA combined efforts with the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and police units from Southfield to Warren to initiate prostitution and narcotic arrest sweeps. By May 1997, more than 260 vehicles had been seized. These sweeps continue on a "random," yet carefully planned basis. Efforts from both the community and 8MBA prevented four topless bars from expanding and were successful in closing two such bars.

Well-planned public and community relations programs have been integral to the effectiveness of 8MBA. The type, scope, and effectiveness of one community relations program undertaken by the 8MBA will be examined in this dissertation. This study will examine the goals, activities and outcomes of this campaign.

Before zeroing in on a portion of this 27-mile roadway, one must consider some general demographic characteristics of the entire area proximate to Eight Mile Road. The following demographic profile includes age ranges and racial distributions as well as housing types and values.

Demographic Profile of Eight Mile Road

In 1992, approximately 265,000 people lived in the census tracts that abut the twenty-seven mile stretch of Eight Mile Road between I-275 and I-94. This area includes communities located in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, all of which share frontage on Eight Mile Road. This demographic information was integral to a market analysis prepared for the 8MBA by McKenna Associates, Inc. (1992). The market analysis was conducted for the general purposes of providing guidance as to the market forces impacting the region and, specifically, Eight Mile Road. It evaluated the market in terms of demographic and physical conditions of Eight Mile Road. It looked at income and retail trends. It also looked at the amount of blight on Eight Mile Road as well as the nature of that blight.

This dissertation is based on the demographic portion of this market analysis, which attempts to provide profiles of Eight Mile Road residents and how they live. The McKenna market analysis indicates that most of the census tracts for the areas bordering Eight Mile Road are approximately a half-mile deep. For purposes of this profile, land to

the north of Eight Mile Road will be referred to as “northside” and that area to the south as “southside.”

Total population of the southside is 121,555. Total population of the northside is 143,625. Age breakdowns are quite similar on both sides; 26% of the southside are 17 years of age and under and 24% of the northside are the same. The largest percentage of residents (63% of both sides) are between the ages of 18 and 64. Thirteen percent of both sides are 65 years or older.

In general, neighborhoods along Eight Mile Road contain a relatively high proportion of children. The average percentage of children in the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) region population is approximately 26%. Most of the older neighborhoods in both the northside communities and Detroit have a percentage equal to or greater than the region's average of 26%. The neighborhoods with the highest percentage of children are located in Detroit between Conant-Dequindre and Woodward Avenue. Here, the percentage of children averages over 35% of its population. The proportion of children drops to just above 20% from Woodward Avenue to the Lodge Freeway.

To the northside, almost every neighborhood has a proportion of children in the excess of the regional average as well. Only a few lightly populated industrial areas in Warren have below average levels. To the west, a Southfield neighborhood between Lahser and Evergreen and a Farmington Hills area neighborhood between Grand River and Inkster Road have more than 25% of the population aged 17 years and under.

Most of the neighborhoods on each side have a lower percentage of elderly than the SEMCOG regional average of 11.62% of the population. A few areas on the

southside, such as Livonia in the neighborhood just east of Haggerty, have an elderly population in excess of 37.5%. Also, Redford Township and Harper Woods have an unusually high number of elderly. Each has an elderly population in excess of 25%.

On the northside, the highest percentage of elderly (over 40%) live in Oak Park between Greenfield and the Lodge Freeway. The next highest concentration of elderly is in Warren around Hoover Road.

Breakdowns according to race on both sides are much less similar. Of the 121,555 total population on the southside, approximately 54,000 are white. Put another way, 45% of southside residents are white. To the northside, approximately 83% of the residents are white. That is, 119,657 of the total 143,625 residents on the northside are white. On the southside, approximately 65,000 of total residents, or 54%, are black. To the northside, only 14% are black.

Clearly, the neighborhoods along Eight Mile Road are highly segregated by race. A further breakdown indicates that on the southside, both Redford Township and Livonia have very small black populations. In contrast, Royal Oak Township is almost entirely black, and Detroit's westside from Livernois to Telegraph is predominantly black (approximately 85%). Only on the east sides of the cities of Detroit, Southfield, and Oak Park are the proportions of white to black balanced and not overwhelmingly one-sided (see fig. 2).

It is also important to realize how these highly segregated residents live. One way to ascertain this is to look at housing type and housing value. In terms of housing type, Eight Mile Road is predominantly single family residential. Specifically, 72.25% of its total housing units are single family detached housing units. This is another area in which

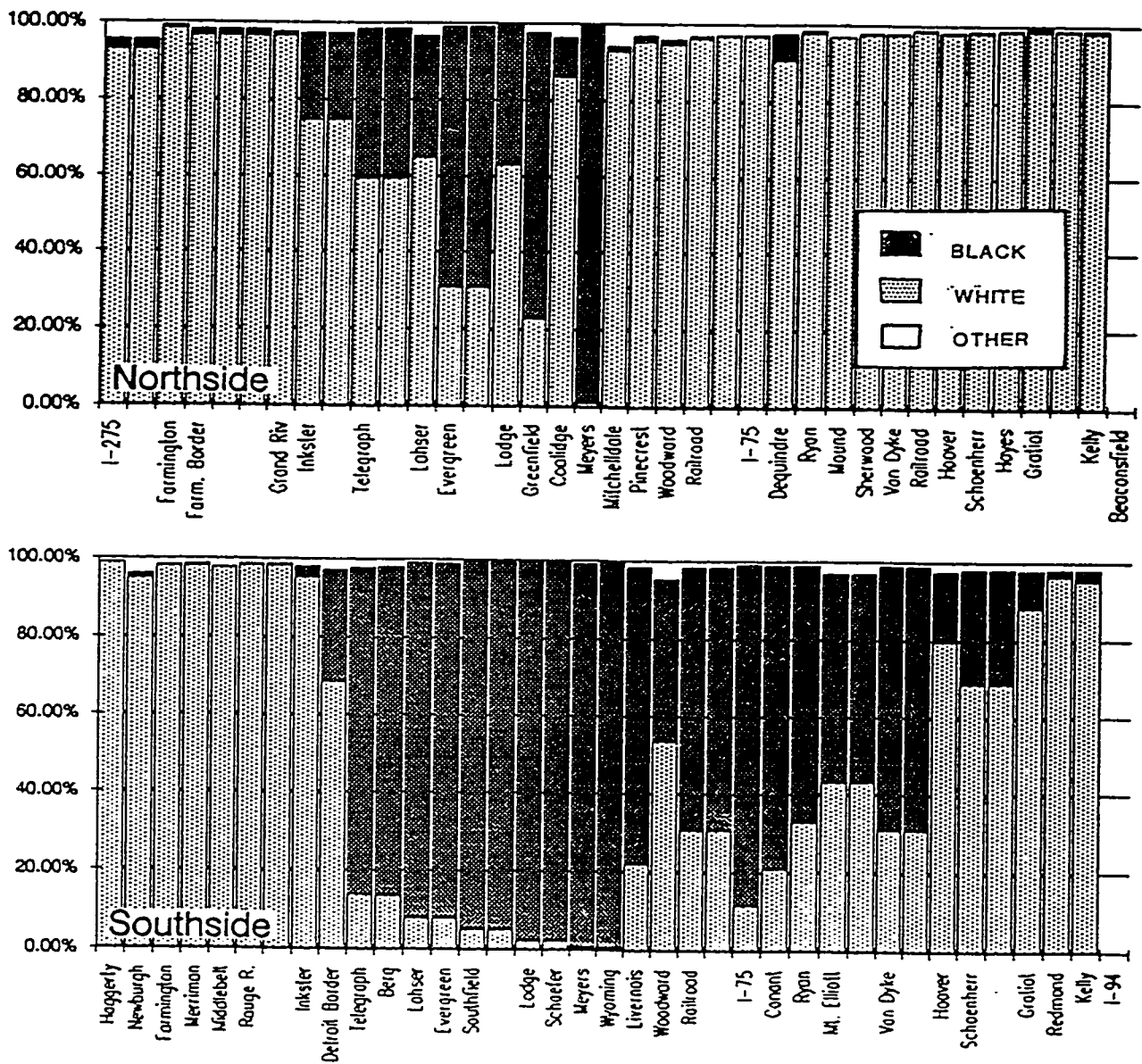


Fig. 2. Racial Composition for Census Tracts Bordering Eight Mile Road
 Source: 1990 U.S. Census. McKenna Associates, Inc.

the northside and southside are much alike. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, most areas show over 60% of the total housing to be single family detached. In many areas, such as northside's Gratiot-Kelly area and southside's Middlebelt-Inkster area, over 90% of residents live in single family detached housing (see fig. 3).

Nonetheless, single family housing market values vary significantly over the length of Eight Mile Road. On the southside, the lowest values fall in the middle portion of the study area --between Woodward and I-75. Here, values fall below \$15,000. The highest value homes are located to the west, around the Newburgh-Haggerty area, where some homes are worth more than \$175,000. On the northside, the highest valued homes were also located to the west. Around the I-275 and Farmington Road area, some homes are valued at \$175,000. The lowest valued homes, worth about \$25,000, are located between the Lodge Freeway and I-75 (see fig. 4).

It is clear that some similarities such as age and housing values exist between the northside and the southside. The differences, however, such as racial makeup, are equally clear.

Review of Literature

This section includes several sub-sections relevant to the rhetorical significance of public relations as well as to the development and execution of a traditional community relations campaign. The first sub-section will examine how traditional public relations campaigns make strategic use of rhetorical devices. The second sub-section will review perspectives, which examine how rhetoric and ideology can serve as a framework for the

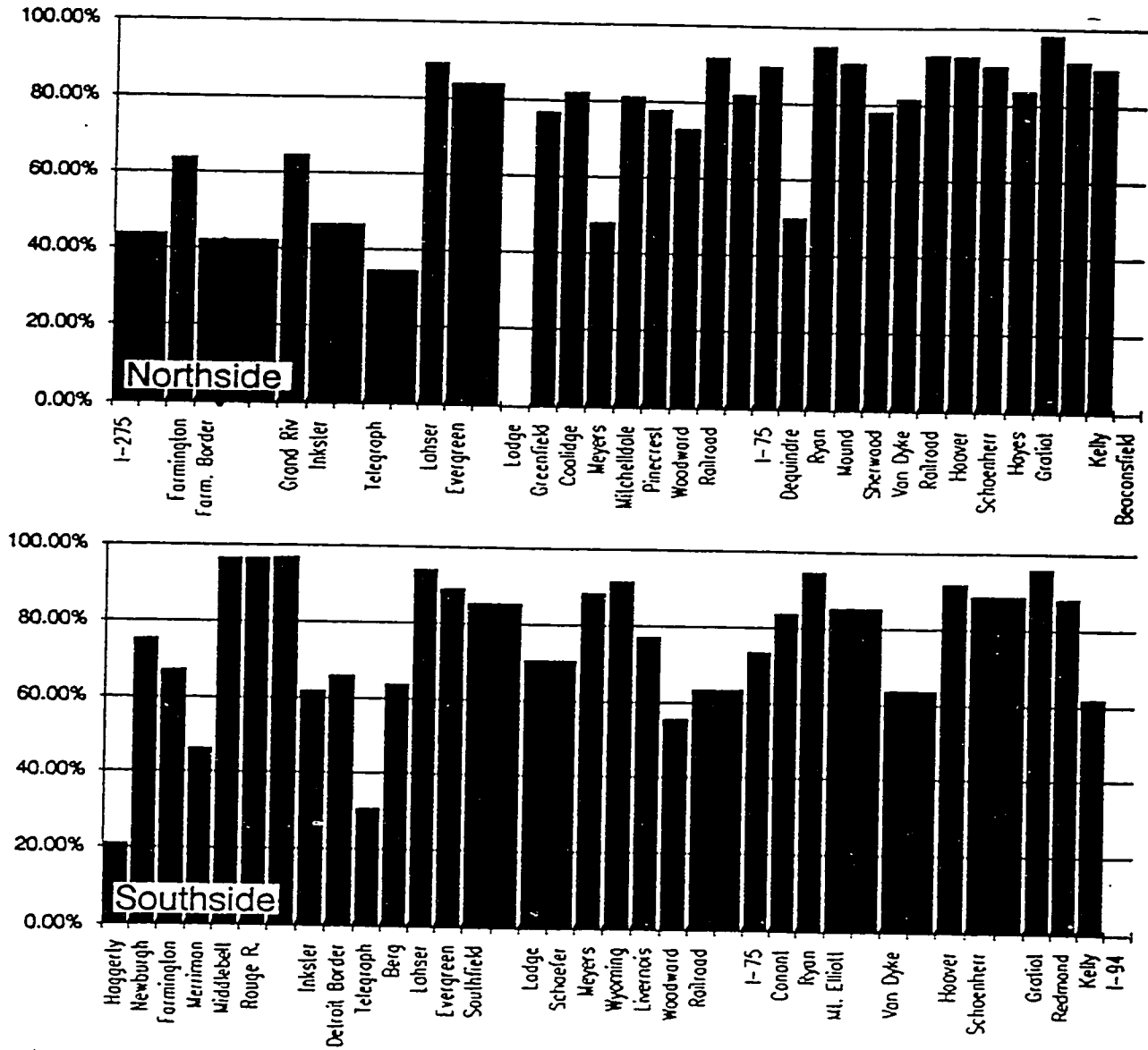


Fig. 3. Percent Single Family Detached Housing for Eight Mile Corridor Census Tracts
 Source: 1990 U.S. Census. McKenna Associates, Inc.

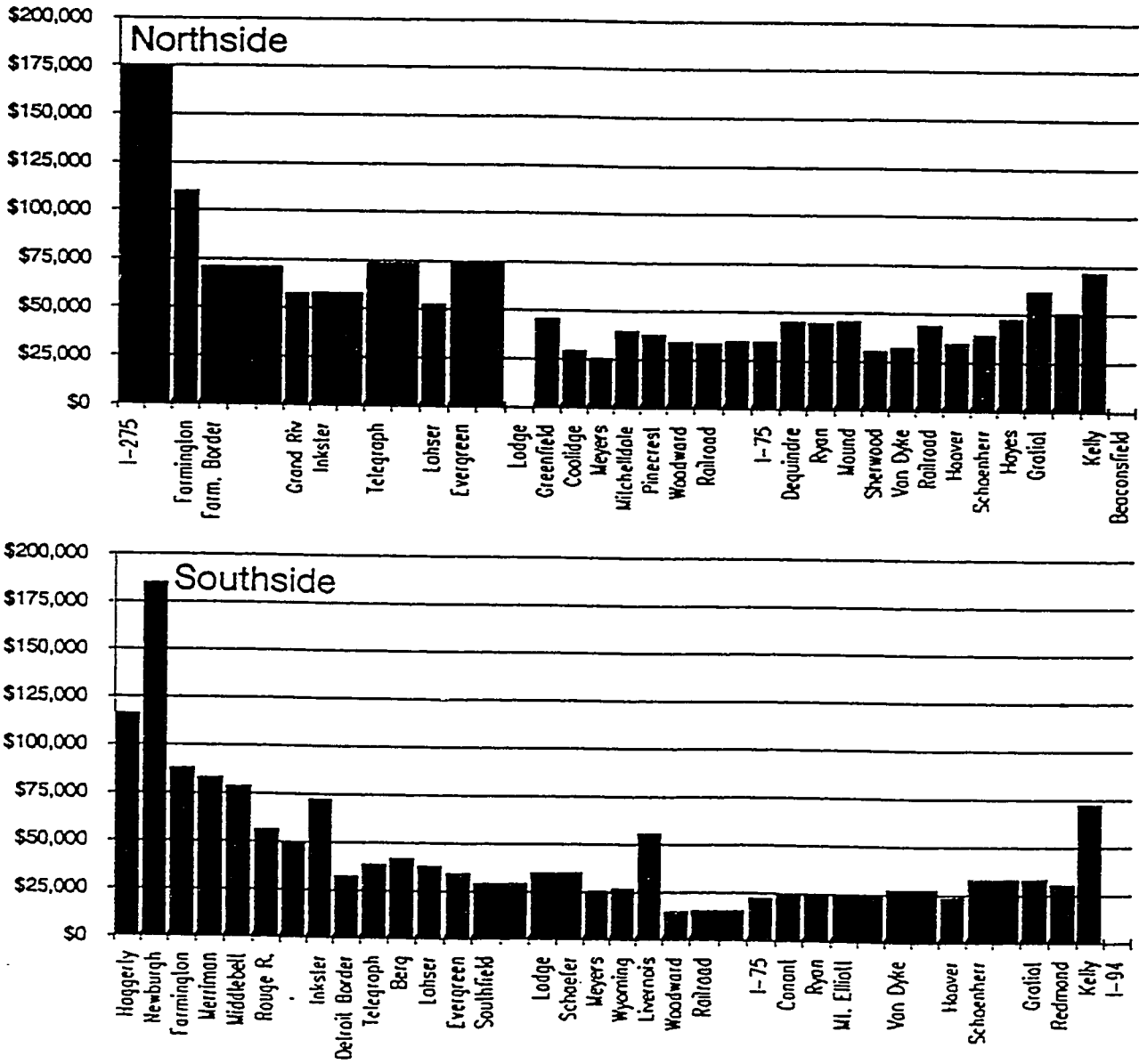


Fig. 4. Housing Values for Eight Mile Corridor Census Tracts
 Source: 1990 U.S. Census. McKenna Associates, Inc.

rhetorical analysis of a community relations campaign. Based on the literature reviewed, two research questions will be posed for examination.

The Rhetoric of Public Relations

For 2,000 years, rhetoric has been defined as the ability to observe in any given case the available means of persuasion. It is the ability -- through fact, argument and other appeals -- to influence the way people think and act.

Rhetoric assumes "self interest." Heath notes that a rhetorical paradigm for the study of public relations is made meaningful by acknowledging that it assumes this assertion of self-interest (Toth & Heath 18). Public relations practitioners use rhetoric to achieve compliance and goodwill, to manage image and reputation and, in some cases, to change perception. Public relations practitioners, through the development of organizational goals as well as messages and programs, set out to influence what people think about and how people act toward an organization, a cause or an idea (Toth & Heath 18). The strategic use of rhetorical devices, then, serves as the backbone of many traditional public relations programs.

In the process of developing programs to influence the way people think, public relations practitioners often help establish key terms through which people think about their society, an idea or an organization. These terms serve as rhetorical devices, shaping the way people view the world around them. This is one example of the ability of public relations strategies to create rhetoric that influences how people think and consequently live. This notion of public relations as a rhetorical phenomenon has recently received scholarly attention. Two books devoted to the rhetorical aspects of public relations have

been published: *Public Relations Inquiry as Rhetorical Criticism: Case Studies of Corporate Discourse and Social Influence*, edited by William Elwood; and *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*, edited by Elizabeth L. Toth and Robert L. Heath.

Traditional evaluative measures of public relations programs are helpful in assessing whether or not specific objectives, such as amounts of money raised or volunteers recruited, were indeed met. Traditional evaluative measures implemented before and after a public relations campaign, then, are effective in judging the impact of a campaign, but a rhetorical criticism examines *why* a campaign was successful and *how* it could have been improved. Public relations is rhetorical. For this reason, it is worthwhile to not only evaluate campaigns using traditional measures, but also to critically examine and analyze how rhetoric functions and impacts the campaign outcome.

Elwood defines public relations as the strategic use of rhetoric to influence specified groups of citizens (8). He argues that rhetorical criticism is a method that analyzes discourse, explains how specific groups respond to this discourse, and illuminates the process by which such discourse influences the targeted publics. Therefore, Elwood concludes, rhetorical criticism is an appropriate means of public relations inquiry.

Elwood isolates two areas of public relations inquiry that are particularly rhetorical in nature -- issue management and public relations ethics. One framework for the study of issue management presents public relations as an attempt to influence public policy. Crable and Vibbert (1985) maintain that organizations cannot create policy, but

engage in rhetorical efforts to “generate and nurture issues until they result in favorable public policy” for corporate entities (3). Because these public relations efforts rely on rhetorical strategies, it is appropriate to examine them through rhetorical approaches.

Richard Weaver discusses public relations as a form of “civic preaching” because it attempts to make others believe or behave in a certain way. Weaver suggested that “language is sermonic” because all human beings are rhetors, or “preachers in private or public capacities” (200). He asserts that because rhetoric impinges on morality and politics, one should think of its methods and sources in relation to a scheme of values (211-212).

Susan Fry Bovet, former editor of *Public Relations Journal*, asserts that “Public relations serves both as an ethical battleground and a barometer for business conduct” (29). Indeed, many discussions about public relations ethics include the notion of a “continuum,” a horizontal line intended to illustrate a dichotomous topic and the range of commitment on opposite sides of the topic. Such discussions involve placing decisions of rightness and wrongness in various places along the continuum; one side representing a very low regard for ethics, and the other representing the strictest of individual responsibility and accountability. Elwood argues that it is rhetoric that constitutes the continuum or battleground.

Elwood also suggests that rhetoric is a political practice (6). Politics, defined in this case as a strategy for obtaining any position of power or control, is experienced through the use of political language. Human beings most often experience politics through rhetoric (Elwood 7). In similar fashion, political scientist Murray Edelman argues that political language is political reality: “It is the language about political

events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience; even developments that are close by take their meaning from the language that depicts them” (104).

Elwood notes that our idea of democratic citizenship has evolved from Aristotle’s rhetorical theory which focused on citizenly use of discourse. During the classic Hellenistic period, the right to participate in the governmental process was limited to a select group of free, native-born, property-holding men (Elwood 7). Today, corporations and institutions enjoy considerable freedom of expression. Organizations are publicly conversing and competing for our favorable opinion. So much so, in fact, that it is becoming more complex and difficult to communicate a meaningful message to a target audience. L.L.L. Golden (1968) in *Only by Public Consent: American Corporations Search for Favorable Opinion*, asserts that the basis of the public’s acceptance of an institution is its performance (19). Golden maintains that the job of gaining acceptance and acting in what the public believes to be the public interest, is one for the entire corporation, especially its top management (19). In order to survive, then, corporations must address the collective concerns of stockholders, employees and customers. For these reasons, Elwood maintains that rhetors, or creators of rhetoric, include both human and corporate citizens (7).

Public relations professionals charge corporations billions of dollars each year to create and manage their images. Public relations practitioners participate in the gatekeeping process that determines which information is presented as news. They develop standards by which public and private sector organizations are judged, and these standards affect consumer buying behavior. Heath (23) notes that corporate images and the criteria that define them become the heart of the free enterprise system. He argues

that the extensiveness of its presence demands that systematic, critical attention be given to the public relations process (Toth & Heath 23). He further suggests that in order to identify appropriate critical methods and standards, a clear understanding of rhetoric is required.

Donald C. Bryant claimed that rhetoric is the function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas (413). This particular view of rhetoric recognizes the organic interaction between people and ideas. This approach to public relations emphasizes the situational fluidity of fact, opinion, value and policy (Toth & Heath 24). Heath argues that this paradigm features the view that, through rhetoric, people and organizations negotiate their relationships.

Within the last decade, rhetorical critics have begun to increasingly focus on public relations phenomena. By using public these phenomena as a focus for rhetorical analysis, critics are building the case that public relations is, indeed, rhetorical. In a special issue of the *Central States Speech Journal* (Summer 1988), George Dionisopoulos and Richard E. Crable apply what they call “definitional hegemony” to the rhetoric of the nuclear power industry after Three Mile Island. They suggest that it is appropriate to assess the rhetorical concept of definitional hegemony within the context of recognized public relations approaches.

Shirley Ann Serini, in this same special issue, examines the role of the special event as a way to connect an organization with its society (146). She seeks to broaden the concept of a special event from its narrow function as publicity to that of a cultural event. Serini asserts that an organization must be woven into the cultural fabric of that society in such a way that its threads both sustain, and are sustained by, every level of activity

(147). Serini views the special event as a cultural performance. To understand the special event within this framework, Serini applies the theory of the Chicago School of symbolic interaction. A group of sociologists -- including John Dewey, George Herbert Mead and W.I. Thomas (to name a few) -- became collectively known as the “Chicago School” because of their common interests and because all but Charles Horton Cooley (a University of Michigan professor) spent much of their academic careers at the University of Chicago. In addition, many used the City of Chicago as a laboratory for their study of society (Kruckeberg & Starck 28). This group of sociologists was most influential and productive from 1892 through about 1939.

Serini concludes that people define themselves and create their realities through interaction, and, because special events are communication through interaction, they are significant to both public relations and communication theory (156).

Crabbe and Vibbert, in a chapter titled “Mobil’s Epideictic Advocacy; ‘Observations’ of Prometheus Bound,” (Elwood) examine “Observations” as a specific set of support-seeking communication strategies used by the Mobil Oil Corporation. Their work focuses on the period from 1976 – 1980 and examines four ideas. One idea concerns “Observations” as a rhetorical response to a complex public relations problem. Crabbe and Vibbert suggest that “Observations” are not only an orchestrated set of appeals to the American value system, but also an important form of epideictic address. “Observations,” they argue, establishes the epideictic that allows the deliberative discourse of corporate advocacy to flourish.

Similarly, Jeffrey L. Courtright, in “I Am a Scientologist” employs a rhetorical approach as a method to understand organizational image management (Elwood 69-84).

He analyzes an image campaign that the Church of Scientology International presented in full-page advertisements in *USA Today* during the summer of 1991. Courtright's analysis utilizes Kenneth Burke's "cluster-agon" methodology to the study of organizational images. This method is a way of finding out what something really means by revealing key terms from the patterns of meanings. Cluster criticism is a method developed by Burke to help the critic discover a rhetor's worldview (Foss 2nd ed. 63). Cluster analysis provides insights into the mind of the rhetor that may not even be known to or conscious to the rhetor.

George Cheney, in "The Corporate Person (Re)Presents Itself" explains how an understanding of the centrality of images and the "decentering" of individuals in corporate rhetoric can be used to enhance rhetorical understanding of corporate public communications (Toth & Heath 165-183). Cheney offers ways in which both public relations practitioners and "consumers" can better comprehend corporate messages and message-making. This perspective on public relations -- the study and practice of corporate public rhetoric -- then, provides an appropriate framework for rhetorical criticism.

Rhetorical critics have suggested that one way public relations practitioners succeed is through effective use of rhetorical strategies. In short, rhetoric is a means by which public relations professionals do their jobs. Rhetoric has long been a respected art as well as a privilege and responsibility enjoyed by the most educated of society. Since the practice of public relations relies so heavily on strategies born from this rich field, should not public relations benefit from analysis using critical rhetorical methods?

Rhetoric, Ideology and the “Ideograph”

Communication scholars have for years struggled to explain how we, as a society, arrive at a definition of reality. Perhaps more significantly, communication scholars have been struggling with explaining how a particular reality is constructed. Most scholars agree that human beings collectively think and act differently than human beings in isolation. The collectivity has a “mind of its own” distinct from the individual qua individual (McGee 2). There is less consensus, however, on the explanations for those differences.

Writers in the tradition of Marx and Mannheim explain this difference by suggesting that the only possibility of “mind” lies within the individual, in the human organism itself (McGee 2). When one appears to “think” or “behave” collectively, one has been tricked or manipulated into accepting the existence of such fantasies as “public mind” or “public opinion” or “public philosophy” (McGee 2).

Marxians argue that most of society, who reside at the base structure, are victims of deceit from those few powerful people, who, in turn, make up the superstructure. Marx maintains that as individuals, we are manipulated into accepting that such fantasies as equality, freedom and opportunity are an integral base of our democratic society. When most everyone accepts this “fantasy,” they form a collectivity of thought that evolves into public perception (McGee 2). We then take this public perception one step further and believe that it is, indeed, reality. Marx refers to this process as the development of a “false consciousness.” According to Sociologist David Maines, a false consciousness prevents masses from relating truly to their position in the economy. A false consciousness exists because people can be coerced into thinking something and

because certain people in a society control the resources for formulating and controlling ideas (Maines). According to Marx, the ideas of the ruling class are in every era the ruling ideas (Maines). This perspective might be termed the materialist perspective. Materialists maintain that this “trick” is an insidious form of “lie,” a self-perpetuating system of beliefs and interpretations forced on all members of the community by the ruling class (McGee 2).

Symbolists generally assume that this “trick” is a transcendence, a voluntary agreement to believe in and to participate in a myth. Burke concentrates more on the individuals who are tricked, and concerns himself more with the structure of “motive” than with the objective conditions that restrict the individual’s freedom to develop a political consciousness (McGee 2).

McGee concludes that while the Marxian asks how the “givens” of a human environment impinge on the development of political consciousness, the symbolist asks how the human symbol-using reality-creating potential impinges on material reality, ordering it normatively, “mythically” (3). McGee argues that we need a theoretical model which accounts for both “ideology” and “myth,” a model which neither denies human capacity to control “power” through the manipulation of symbols nor begs Marx’s essential questions regarding the influence of “power” on creating and maintaining political consciousness (4).

On the other hand, many rhetorical theorists begin from the premise that reality is socially constructed through communication. C. Jack Orr offers what he calls a constructionist perspective (263-274), arguing that reality is constructed through knowledge of truth, and truth is arrived at through symbolic interaction. Put another way,

groups create and define their reality through a consensually validated symbol system. Thus rhetoric, here defined as symbolic interaction, is epistemic in nature, as it plays a key role in creating and sustaining reality.

Orr also examines two meta-constructionist views, intersubjectivism and critical rationalism (263-274). The first, intersubjectivism, suggests that reality is built, created, or made through symbolic interaction and whatever is not fashioned in this manner is not usefully called reality or truth (274). Humans, then, have sole authority in determining truth and reality. From this, one can assume that different cultures will produce different realities.

Peter Winch argues that no transcultural criterion for truth can be invoked to censor culturally contingent versions of reality (264). Reality does not come before language. Rather, reality is imbedded in the linguistic community in which it is defined. Orr supports this argument.

Some attack the intersubjectivism perspective on the grounds that it completely ignores objective reality. In response, Orr rejects Blocker's view that it is the concept of objective reality that enables us to acknowledge the limitations of the human standpoint to completely reproduce the world in thought and deed (233). Another major criticism is its complete rejection of absolute truth. If truth is agreement, what do we do with the "outsider?" This perspective does not allow for any new thought or intellectual invention. Or, perhaps there are different levels of truth, and the outsider possesses the lesser truth.

Unlike intersubjectivism, critical rationalism provides a consistent basis for recognizing, criticizing, and improving upon the constructions of reality which people

produce. This position, Orr explains, affirms absolute truth but recognizes the contingent character of knowledge. It also assumes reality is conceptually organized and interpreted through and by communication, but whatever versions of reality result from this process are partial and contingent before that reality which eludes our understanding. Unlike intersubjectivism, critical rationalism does not assume that humans are in sole authority over defining truth. Rather, truth surpasses human limitations. This perspective challenges us to continue searching for truth, because it remains uncertain.

Michael McGee provides a useful discussion of the term “ideograph” and how it functions in the social construction of reality. At the same time that McGee considers Marx's thesis that an ideology determines mass beliefs and thus restricts freedom of thought, he considers ideology as transcendent, as much an influence on the belief and behavior of the ruler as on the ruled (1 - 16). He suggests that social control is, in essence, control over consciousness.

Further, McGee explains “humans are conditioned, not directly to belief and behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief” (6). He terms these concepts “ideographs.” It is presumed then, that when such terms as “freedom of speech,” “liberty,” and “equality” are used, Americans will react predictably, for these terms signify and contain a unique ideological commitment. McGee argues that because terms such as these exist in real discourse, they function as agents of political consciousness. Because the terms come to be a part of the real lives of the people whose motives they articulate, there is an element of social control based on the ideograph. This suggests that we can select specific

ideographs for use in a campaign to convey certain meaning and to predict a particular range of responses.

Because collectivities require some degree of conformity in behavior and belief, ideographs allow for the characterization of some forms of social control. Presidents, for example, offer a rhetoric of war to persuade citizens of war's necessity. President Bush's continual use of the phrase "raping of Kuwait" meets the criterion for McGee's ideograph: it conjures up feelings of victimization, vulgarity and violation. Bush assumed the mass public would respond in a predictable manner to this ideograph and, in turn, support his effort to save Kuwait from this atrocity. Bush regarded those who opposed his decision as unpatriotic and essentially un-American.

Ideographs signify a unique ideological commitment. "They are one-term sums of an orientation, the species of 'God' or 'Ultimate' term that will be used to symbolize the line of argument the meanest sort of individual would pursue, if that individual had the dialectical skills of philosophers, as a defense of a personal stake in and commitment to the society" (McGee 7). He further suggests that ideology in practice is a political language that has the capacity to dictate decision-making and control public belief and behavior. Ideographs, then, are one way to conceptually link rhetoric and ideology.

Celeste Condit, in her effort to explore the causal force of rhetoric in social processes, draws strikingly similar conclusions about the relationship between rhetoric and reality (79-97). She, too, maintains that public discourse shapes the actions we take collectively as a nation. Condit argues that because talk is inherently rhetorical, people talk differently to different audiences and act differently in different contexts. This perspective also recognizes that different audiences take the same words to mean

different things. She takes this assumption a step further in examining how specific ideographs, imbedded in American language, actually effected social change.

In her study of American public discourse about civil rights in national magazines from 1939-1959, Condit argues that the vocabulary of certain periods influenced American race relations (88-93). Perhaps the clearest example of this is the difference in rhetoric in 1939 and 1959. The racist vocabulary faded and the ideograph “democracy” changed to “civil rights.” The ideograph “desegregation” changed to “integration.”

Condit also claims that rhetoric influences social processes. For example, between 1947 and 1953, there was a new vision of blacks in America. World War II had ended, and the national press had portrayed blacks as useful workers and supporters of democracy. This acceptance was short-lived, however, especially when demand for workers slumped and competition for prosperity became fierce. Once again, blacks were scrambling for adequate housing, educational opportunities and a place in the workforce.

The rhetoric of this period, Condit explains, reflects these conditions through the ideographs “law” and “constitution.” The blacks used the “law” to petition for housing, schools, and jobs, arguing that segregation was founded upon undemocratic laws, which are “unconstitutional.” Since blacks were now seen, and saw themselves as equal and supporters of democracy, Condit suggests that their argument for the same legal protections held by other citizens was more compelling. In this manner, the ideograph “law” admits agents to all other ideographs (i.e. “equality”, “freedom”) of the community.

Condit concluded that the ideographs that maintained a racist society lost their force to control the social order. “Laws were made in the new vocabulary rather than in

the old; public policies were framed in the new vocabulary rather than in the old, and social practices were experienced by many through the new vocabulary as well” (15). This perspective also suggests that in order to effect change, we need to begin talking change or, perhaps, change our talking.

Thus, reality is created, changed and maintained through rhetoric. These various perspectives which link rhetoric and ideology suggest that rhetoric constructs reality because it endows reality with meaning (Elwood 6). Rhetorical criticism, then, is an appropriate means of public relations inquiry because rhetorical criticism is a method that critically analyzes discourse in an effort to explain how and why strategic uses of language influence target publics.

Research Questions

As the review of literature suggests, we, as human beings, are conditioned to use a certain vocabulary of concepts, and those concepts function to control our behavior and beliefs. It is useful, therefore, to examine how changing those concepts might create social change. More specifically, this study explores if changing language references for Eight Mile Road will have an impact upon changing the perceptions of Eight Mile Road.

Following are the research questions to be answered:

1. How effective is the use of ideographs in a community relations campaign in redefining a symbolic marker such as Eight Mile Road?

Ideographs make up a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief (McGee 6). Human beings, then, are conditioned to use a certain vocabulary of concepts, and those concepts function to control beliefs and behavior. This study will examine the effectiveness of using new ideographs in the

construction of messages in changing the vocabulary people use when referring to Eight Mile Road.

2. Can a rhetorical evaluation be a sensitive indicator of the success of a community relations campaign?

This study will examine the value of a rhetorical analysis as a measure of the success of a community relations campaign. It will also examine the efficacy of a traditional approach to a community relations campaign evaluation.

Methodology

The methodology for this study is twofold. First, a standard community relations campaign evaluation will reveal if the objectives of the community relations campaign were met. Second, this study will examine and assess the rhetorical aspects of a traditional community relations campaign. The campaign will make use of predetermined ideographs as both a rhetorical strategy and a public relations tool. The rhetorical methodology will make use of Burke's cluster analysis as a way to interpret and compare discourse before and after the campaign.

Rhetorical Analysis as Evaluation

Several steps are necessary to examine and assess the rhetorical aspects of a standard community relations campaign. Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis will be the method whereby the discourse of the campaign will be interpreted.

First, prior to the campaign (which began in July 1996), a cluster analysis of the discourse in community feedback sessions and media clippings was undertaken. These feedback sessions included representatives from various categories: neighborhood resident, neighborhood leader, religious leader, school administrator, business leader and

business owner. Clippings were taken from local and regional print media between July 1995 and June 1996. The cluster analysis of discourse found in this session and in the media clips revealed how people in the targeted area were then currently talking about Eight Mile Road.

Second, the Eight Mile Boulevard Association designed and executed a community relations campaign that took place between July 1996 and December 1996. Constructs such as the ideograph were applied to programs throughout the campaign to assess, among other things, recurrent messages and themes and how these affect the development of Eight Mile Road as a symbol of cooperation and unity of all its communities. A second community feedback session, using different people in the same categories, was held at the conclusion of the campaign. Similarly, a second clipping analysis was conducted. The evaluation of clusters in the post-campaign discourse was designed to reveal changes in language. Did the ideographs embedded in the campaign impact how people talked about Eight Mile Road?

The Cluster Analysis Method

Rhetors actively choose language directed toward a particular interpretation. Through strategic use of language, rhetors define a situation and attempt to affect the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of a particular audience. Kenneth Burke suggests that although the rhetor consciously chooses language toward a desired interpretation, there are often interactions within the work of which the rhetor is unaware. Elizabeth Riley Avalos suggests that cluster analysis is one way a critic can examine a pattern of meanings in the discourse which was not immediately obvious and perhaps contrary to the meaning perceived on initial examination (Foss 388).

Burke, in his *Philosophy of Literary Form*, maintains that although a speaker or writer is perfectly conscious of the act itself, and is conscious of selecting imagery to reinforce a particular mood, he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all of these equations (20). Burke contends that these interrelationships reveal the writer's motives: They are his situation and the situation is just another word for motives. These motives, then, are only revealed after this kind of investigation is possible: that is, after completion of the work (20). First, the critic must look for "what goes with what" (Burke 20) or the "verbal combinations and equations in which the speaker tends to associate a key term with other terms" (Berthold 303). Burke explained the central idea of cluster analysis: "Now the work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He uses 'associated clusters.' And you may, by examining his work, find "what goes with what in these clusters - what kinds of acts and images and personalities and situations go with his notions of heroism, villainy, consolation, despair, etc." (Burke 20).

According to Berthold, there are four ways to determine what goes with what (303). The speaker may do one or more of the following: use a conjunction to connect a key term with another term, link a key term to another term through a cause-effect relationship, use imagery to tie a key term with another term, or connect the two terms through mutual relationships to third terms.

The clusters in a rhetor's artifact generally will not be conscious to the rhetor: "And though he be perfectly conscious of the act of writing, conscious of selecting a certain kind of imagery to reinforce a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations" (Burke 20). Cluster

analysis, then, provides insights into the mind of the rhetor that may not even be known to or conscious to the rhetor.

Community Relations Campaign

In July 1996 through December 1996, a community relations campaign was developed and executed by the 8MBA. The campaign was targeted at the portion of Eight Mile Road that borders the city of Warren. Some of the public relations activities used for analysis were part of a larger on-going program already in place at 8MBA. Other public relations efforts were designed around the purposes of this study. All artifacts from the campaign are available for study. The available artifacts include media clips, newsletters, the annual report, special event mailers and speech texts. In order to design an effective campaign, the 8MBA followed the traditional stages of public relations activities: extensive research, the development of attainable and measurable objectives, the execution of several programs, and sound evaluation. Most experienced public relations practitioners recognize these stages as the typical textbook, Research-Objectives-Programs-Evaluation (ROPE) sequence (Measell 98). Some textbooks, such as *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice* (Baskin, Aronoff, Lattimore 109) refer to the sequence as Research - Planning - Action - Evaluation. Robert Kendall, in *Public Relations Campaign Strategies* lists the stages for public relations campaign planning as Research - Adaptation - Implementation Strategy - Evaluation (13). Though the names of the steps vary, all sequences include the traditional public relations stages of research, objectives, programs and evaluation used in planning a campaign.

Research

The community relations campaign limited itself to the portion of Eight Mile Road that separates Warren from Detroit. More specifically, it targeted the population from Seven Mile to Nine Mile between the roads of Dequindre and Hayes. This includes portions of the zip codes 48091 and 48089 to the north of Eight Mile Road and 48234 and 48205 to the south.

Research took several forms. First, community feedback sessions afforded insights into current perceptions of Eight Mile Road. Members of the groups consisted of such key contacts as leaders in the business community, neighborhoods, civic groups and schools. Local residents were also represented. General questions (“What do you think of when you hear Eight Mile Road?”) were asked. These community feedback sessions made clearer the concerns and attitudes of those people for whom the campaign was targeted. They also helped determine “bad” terms that were currently being used in relation to Eight Mile Road.

Second, clipping analysis of the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* was used to measure the effectiveness of publicity efforts surrounding the campaign. This clipping analysis served two purposes: (1) to determine how much coverage the campaign received; (2) to examine how the media “talked” about Eight Mile Road. An examination of the specific ideographs the media used when referring to Eight Mile Road reflected this. Clipping analysis during pre-campaign research was facilitated through the Lexis/Nexis program, which indexes the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News*. This program allows one to enter key words or phrases and then to locate all newspaper articles that used these words. Clipping analysis also included articles from the *Macomb*

Daily and other suburban and neighborhood publications compiled by the 8MBA throughout the campaign.

Clipping analysis could reflect, for instance, the different contexts in which the media refers to Eight Mile Road. Is it merely used as a reference for the dividing line between Detroit and its surrounding suburbs, as evidenced by these statements: "...many people voted with their white-wall tires and fled across Eight Mile Road in the suburbs, leaving Detroit..." (*The New York Times*, November 3, 1993)? Or does the media use the term as a reference to the material conditions of the surrounding areas? For example, in reference to panhandlers, a *Detroit News* article stated that "Half a million cars speed by Empire Iron Works on Eight Mile Road in Detroit each day, but it's foot traffic that poses a problem for the home-improvement business (July 25, 1993).

Another use of the term Eight Mile Road by the media is as a symbolic divider between whites and blacks. For example, "In one of America's most racially segregated urban areas, Eight Mile Road is a chasm dividing blacks and whites into separate worlds. The road is Detroit's northern boundary. Beyond it lie predominantly white suburbs. To the south is the nation's seventh largest city, and 76% of its one million people are black" (*The New York Times*, March 24, 1992).

Community relations objectives were developed from the outcome of this research.

A few were readily identifiable:

Objectives

- *To make the community aware of the efforts of 8MBA
- * To increase associate membership of 8MBA

- * To encourage participation in the various efforts of 8MBA
- * To boost the fund raising efforts of 8MBA
- * To communicate the key message that Eight Mile Road is a safe and desirable place to live, work and play
- * To communicate the message that citizens joining together can make a difference

Programs

The entire community relations campaign was scheduled over the six months of July 1996 through December 1996 (see fig. 5). Pre-campaign research in the form of media clipping analysis looked at coverage between June 1995 - July 1996. The pre-campaign community feedback sessions took place in early July 1996. Post-campaign research in the form of media clip analysis examined coverage throughout the six months of the campaign (July 1996 - December 1996) and through March 1997. Post-campaign research focused on the community feedback sessions, which were held in January 1997.

Several programs were designed to meet the predetermined objectives of the campaign. First, a more organized and formal approach at securing speaking engagements took place. Service clubs such as the Lions or Rotary that meet each week were solicited. The prepared speeches included specific material about the efforts and vision of 8MBA. These speaking engagements proposed to familiarize the audience with the efforts and goals of the association, encourage participation in these efforts through such things as volunteerism or donations and to positively impact future fund raising efforts.

Month		Programs
July 1996	1.1	Define measures of success
July 1996	1.2	Preliminary clipping analysis, set quantitative objectives for membership recruitment, volunteer recruitment, determine number of speaking engagements, air time, PSAs aired
July 1996	1.3	Conduct focus groups
August 1996	2.1	Identify newsworthy programs
August 1996	2.2	Develop key messages and ideographs
August 1996	2.3	Plan production needs and develop budget
September 1996	3.1	Write pitch letters, press kits, photos, materials
September 1996	3.2	Develop media list
October 1996	3.3	General story placement (regional dailies, TV, radio)
October 1996	3.4	Local story placement (newsletters, weeklies, CATV)
August 1996	4.1	Identify groups in local areas
August 1996	4.2	Develop pitch letter for speakers
September 1996	4.3	Mail pitch letter and do speakers phone campaign
September 1996	4.4	Write basic speech and slide show based on key messages
November 1996	4.5	Deliver speeches (8MBA staff)
September 1996	5.1	Determine desired action (join, volunteer, donate) and develop direct mail piece
September 1996	5.2	Develop mailing list using Selectphone data (CD at 8MBA)
October 1996	5.3	Write and produce direct mail materials
October 1996	5.4	Mailing
November 1996	5.5	Process direct mail responses
December 1996	6.1	Tabulate results: Clipping analysis, direct mail responses, number of personal contacts through speeches, inquiries based on speeches, donations, volunteers.

1 Preliminary Research 2 Planning Programs 3 Publicity 4 Speaking Engagements 5 Direct Mail 6 Post Research

Fig. 5. 8MBA Programs and Timeline

Efforts were made to secure placements in neighborhood publications. Block club newsletters and business publications were solicited. The Detroit Planning Commission, Warren City Planning Department, Warren Chamber of Commerce and the Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library assisted in determining which publications were solicited. The 8MBA also promoted itself through advertisements for volunteerism and membership in these publications. Opportunities for feature story placements in these publications also existed.

Direct mail was also utilized. Again, opportunities for volunteerism, membership and more information about the vision of 8MBA were provided. As mentioned earlier, the 8MBA's publicity efforts targeted many local media. An attempt to incorporate the campaign's specific ideographs into the media's "language" was undertaken by using these terms in all campaign materials. News releases generated awareness of the campaign's various efforts. Additionally, the 8MBA sought to get its message carried over local cable television stations (CATV).

Evaluation

Evaluation of the campaign was conducted at several levels. First, clipping analysis of terms used provided insight into the influence of the campaign's ideographs. Second, the amount of local media placements as well as those placements in community publications indicated the success of the campaign's publicity efforts. Additionally, analysis of the tone of articles, including terms used to identify Eight Mile Road, again provided insight into the influence of the campaign's ideographs. The clipping analysis indicated quantity of placements. Further examination, however, indicated quality of

placements. For example, did a publication use the campaign's ideographs by simply printing a news release word-for-word, or did a reporter incorporate ideographs into a column by choice?

The direct mail pieces provided opportunities for citizens to participate in the efforts of the 8MBA through volunteerism. They also provided an opportunity to join the 8MBA as an associate member as well as indicate how to request more information about the association. A measure of how many people respond to any of these opportunities served as an evaluative tool. Did the campaign meet its set objective for volunteers? How many new associate memberships did the campaign yield?

Speaking engagements provided another opportunity to evaluate the success of the campaign. Did the number of people reached through these engagements reach the set objective? How many people requested more information about the association? What was the overall interest level of the citizens in attendance?

Lastly, the amount of funds raised throughout the campaign served as an evaluative tool. How much new money became available to the 8MBA as a result of the campaign?

These measures listed are traditional evaluative measures employed by public relations practitioners. They provide ways for practitioners to objectively measure the success of a public relations campaign.

Rhetorical Analysis

As noted earlier, McGee suggests that “humans are conditioned, not directly to belief and behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief” (6). He termed these concepts “ideographs.”

It is presumed then, that when humans use certain ideographs, they will act in predictable ways. Similarly, Condit (79-97) argues that discourse shapes the actions we take collectively. Ideographs imbedded in American language, for instance, effected social change. The notion of changing belief and behavior through language will undergird this analysis.

A rhetorical analysis using cluster analysis was undertaken to examine the effectiveness of a set of predetermined ideographs when used in a community relations campaign to change the perception of Eight Mile Road. The 8MBA selected certain terms that formed the theme or symbolic message of the campaign. The terms were ones that symbolize the sort of ideology that the association wants to promote. In short, the terms represent the vision of 8MBA. The words also counter negative terms or reinforce those positive ones that were revealed in the pre-campaign cluster analysis. The terms the 8MBA chose are as follows: *Clean; Practical; Welcome; Community; Connect; Join Forces; Responsible; Hope.*

Results

Results of the study are divided into two major parts: (1) analysis of the rhetorical effectiveness of the use of specific ideographs in changing perception about Eight Mile Road; and (2) discussion of the descriptive data from focus groups and interviews as well as all publicity efforts including local media, direct mailings and speaking engagements.

In Chapter Five, a summary of the findings as they relate to the original research questions posed is provided. The implications of the study's findings from a communication perspective are discussed in detail. In brief, the findings will: (1) suggest those rhetorical devices useful to a community relations campaign; (2) specifically

examine the effectiveness of use of the ideographs in a campaign designed to impact a community's collective perception; and (3) reveal public relations tactics and techniques useful in a community relations campaign.

The findings should provide insight into just how much the vocabulary of constructs of a specific community function as guides for its belief and behavior. Findings should also reveal the effect that changing those constructs has on changing that collective belief and behavior. The practice of public relations relies on rhetorical strategies. This study should better reveal this process.

Plan of this Study

This first chapter has provided a general description of the problem and of the rationale for conducting research on the community relations efforts of the 8MBA. This chapter also included a brief background on the demographic character of Eight Mile Road as well as a profile of the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. The review of literature contained two sub-sections. First, theories supporting the social construction of reality were presented. Second, a discussion of traditional principles of public relations as they relate to the development and execution of an effective community relations campaign was provided.

This chapter also detailed the twofold methodology used in the study. First, traditional measures of evaluation were applied to the community relations campaign. Second, a rhetorical analysis was conducted by applying Kenneth Burke's concept of cluster analysis to discourse from community feedback sessions and to media coverage of the campaign. This analysis was conducted before and after the community relations campaign.

Chapter Two will provide a historical look at the development of Eight Mile Road. This chapter will also provide a discussion of community relations as well as the concept of community from a sociological perspective. More specifically, it examines various sociological perspectives, suggesting that public relations is a field that grew out of historical and social forces -- a sort of reaction to or attempt at restoring and maintaining a sense of community.

Chapter Three will detail the results of preliminary research of the campaign. This includes cluster analysis of the pre-campaign community feedback sessions and survey of media coverage. Chapter Three will also provide a chronological timeline and a complete description of the community relations campaign designed and executed by the 8MBA.

Chapter Four will provide the results of post-campaign research, embracing both cluster analysis of the post-campaign community feedback sessions and a survey of media coverage. This will also include application of the traditional evaluative measures of a community relations campaign.

The last chapter will be devoted to a summary of the findings as they relate to the original research questions asked as well as a discussion of the implications of the research for academic and professional purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

EIGHT MILE ROAD: HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

Eight Mile Road has a significant place in Michigan's history. This particular roadway has cut through the center of Michigan since the late 1700's. Once considered the base line in the Meridian-Baseline system of surveying land ownership, this roadway served as the north to south divider during the Northwest Ordinance. At some point, people started calling the base line "Baseline Road" and eventually, "Eight Mile Road." This chapter reviews the development over time of land parcels along Eight Mile Road. It examines early land ownership and the eventual development of businesses and neighborhoods along the roadway. This chapter also reviews a body of literature relevant to the loss of community and examines how that concept relates to the development of the field of modern public relations. This section provides different frameworks for viewing the development of modern public relations practices by looking at significant advances in communication and transportation in American culture.

Historical Development

The Northwest Ordinance took place July 13, 1787. The Ordinance covers all land north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota. A portion of the Northwest Ordinance made use of a survey system that introduced the Meridian-Baseline system. This provided a systematic way of surveying land to determine ownership, which had been very irregular up to that point (Knes).

The Northwest Ordinance described all land parcels in Michigan as being east or west of the Prime Meridian, which serves as the north to south divider. At the time, all

land parcels were referred to as north or south of the base line. At some point, a road was run along that base line and eventually became known as Eight Mile Road (Knes). Eight Mile started as a surveying line for the Northwest Territory in the 1700s. The state built Eight Mile Road, from Grand River to I-94 in 1930 and from Grand River to what is now I-275 in 1957 (Gerritt A1). According to John Nagy, planning director for the city of Livonia, I-275 was constructed through farmland and terrain between 1974-1976 as a strong north-south roadway through the state.

There is also a vertical line through the state that does not correspond to any other road (Douglas). This vertical line is arbitrary and cuts through Michigan around US 23. All townships were numbered from the point where the horizontal and vertical lines intersect (Douglas).

Outside of Detroit, Eight Mile Road is still referred to as Baseline Road. The Huron-Clinton Metroparks Map of Southeastern Michigan (1997-1998), for example, refers to Eight Mile Road as Baseline as it travels west through the city of Livonia and into Washtenaw County.

One way to identify changes in historical development along Eight Mile Road is to examine the Sanborn map collection, the dominant publisher of fire insurance maps in the United States. The Sanborn maps consist of a uniform series of large-scale maps, dating from 1867 to the present and depicting the commercial, industrial, and residential sections of some twelve thousand cities and towns in the United States, Canada and Mexico (Ristow, Library of Congress, ix). These maps reflect detailed information about the physical characteristics of individual buildings and fire fighting apparatus through the use of color-coding, symbols, and abbreviations. The maps show street patterns and

street widths, as well as the location and shape of individual buildings. Color-coding is used to identify a building's construction material.

An examination of Sanborn maps dating from 1933 -1962 and the Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Detroit and Suburbs (Baist Volumes 1,2,3) provides a sense of the development over time of areas on and around Eight Mile Road. Following are general observations made from a review of these maps.

In 1911, the City of Detroit existed only to the south of the Palmer Park area. North of this area was undeveloped and not yet part of the city (Baist 33). A few early Detroit area landmarks dotted the area, such as St. Francis Home for Orphan Boys, a creamery and two hospitals, named "Small Pox Hospital" and "Contagious Hospital." There were also lumberyards and churches scattered throughout the area. There were a few homes sprinkled along side streets and no substantive residential density. Plots of developed land were named after the owner, such as "Eason's Palmer Park Sub."

Private ownership of large plots of land usually for agricultural use was commonplace in 1929 (Baist, Volume 1, 28-37). Mrs. J.E. White owned 40 acres with Eight Mile Road frontage. Thirty and 50-acre parcels were owned by other individuals. There was much vacant land along Eight Mile Road with few homes. Subdivisions were still named after the owner, such as "Lawrence Park Sub," "Harder Sub," and "Bell Realty C. Sub." One development between Mound and Van Dyke roads was named "Baseline Sub." Subdivision names changed every couple of streets or so.

The area just west of Gratiot Avenue featured subdivisions with more contemporary names. "Waltham Manor Sub," "Hunds Regent Park Sub" and "Michigan Heights Sub" are just a few of the subdivisions in this area in 1929. There

was still much vacant land on and around Eight Mile Road at this time. One house and a Detroit Edison Power House faced Eight Mile Road. To the east on Eight Mile Road, between Hayes and Kelly roads, there were two frame houses facing Eight Mile Road, but there were still many unoccupied lots along Eight Mile Road. The far eastern end of Eight Mile Road (the Grosse Pointes area) was not continuous and even less developed. Vacant land on each side of Eight Mile Road remained and the road itself broke off and started up again in a few areas. There was one subdivision between Mack Avenue and a creek named "Lochmoor on the Lakes Sub."

Subdivisions

By 1929, more brick and stone buildings facing Eight Mile Road around the Wyoming and Woodward Avenue areas appeared (Baist, Volume 2, 36 – 37). Individual subdivisions became plentiful along this portion of the road. There is much more romance to the names of subdivisions now, such as "Detroyal Gardens," "Green Acres," and "Garden Homes Sub." There is also notably more development along the side streets to the north and south of Eight Mile Road. The houses were developed in clusters rather than scattered throughout the area.

Just west of this area, around Lahser Road, development diminished, and Eight Mile Road again became largely made up of privately owned large plots of land (Baist, Volume 3, 1). West to Farmington Road was almost completely unoccupied. At this time, Eight Mile Road was referred to as "8 Mile" up to Beech Rd, then as "Baseline (8 Mile Road) Super Highway" up to Five Points Avenue (in Milford) and finally as "8 Mile (Baseline)" west of Farmington Road.

By 1933, Eight Mile Road was showing further development (Sanborn 2231). A

“snapshot” of the area south of Eight Mile Road, across from the east end of Oakland County (Russell and Stevens streets) reflects more homes and quite a few flats. Homes did not face Eight Mile Road and are concentrated along side streets to the north and south of Eight Mile Road. The maps indicate that some homes are brick-veneered, while most are classified simply as frame dwellings. Approximately one third to one half of the homes had detached garages. Eight Mile Road was a commercial street at this time, featuring many filling stations and various kinds of stores. Most of these service establishments had Eight Mile Road addresses.

The south side of Eight Mile Road was officially incorporated into the City of Detroit through a process of annexation between 1806 - 1926 (Stermer map). The last portion of land just west of Telegraph Road and south of Eight Mile Road was officially annexed into the City of Detroit in 1926 (Stermer).

More density in housing appeared as West Eight Mile Road became East Eight Mile Road around the Macomb County border (Sanborn 2232). In Macomb County in 1946, there was clearly more variety in services available to the residents than that available just a decade earlier. There were dance halls, restaurants, dry cleaning and auto wash establishments. The area directly east of Dequindre featured a large steel frame building, which housed a collection of stores.

A look at St. Clair Shores, a suburb just north of Eight Mile Road in Macomb County, in 1933 reveals the same pattern of service-oriented development. A riding academy, a road house, a tavern, a dance hall, and various stores and auto repair establishments existed. The landmark St. Joan of Arc Church was erected by this time. The area just west of Greater Mack Avenue featured “Lochmoor on the Lake” and

“Maple Park” subdivisions. Brick veneer homes were scattered along the side streets of these subdivisions.

A similar look at Ferndale in 1933, a suburb west of St. Clair Shores and just north of Eight Mile was much the same in its orientation (Sanborn 17-19). Frame houses (none of which face Eight Mile Road), two public schools to the north on Woodward Avenue, and brick veneered buildings which house various stores, filling stations, and auto repair shops characterized Ferndale at this time.

Until the post-World War II building boom, Eight Mile Road to the north was mostly farmland, except along the Woodward corridor. A few early Detroit landmarks sprinkled the area. Private ownership of large plots of land was commonplace. Subdivisions with frame dwellings were beginning to develop. Businesses were primarily service-oriented establishments at this time. All of this changed after World War II (Gerritt A9).

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, a white exodus contributed to the growth of suburbs north of Eight Mile Road, such as Warren and St. Clair Shores. Soon thereafter, most residents immediately south of Eight Mile Road were black. Some say this is when Eight Mile Road became a symbol of racial division (Gerritt A9).

By 1955, Eight Mile Road between Greenfield and Inkster roads was dense with unoccupied lots and privately owned smaller plots of land (5 acres) with frontage on Eight Mile Road. There is one larger privately owned plot of land (45 acres) just east of Lahser Road. Names of subdivisions still reflect land ownership, such as “Harry Slatkins Sub No. 2” between Lahser and Evergreen roads and “Purcell Sub,” just west of

Southfield Road. The terms “Eight Mile Road,” “Baseline,” and “Super Highway” are still used interchangeably at this time.

The 1967 Riots

Detroit experienced a summer in 1967 so violent that it became the legacy of the city. Although it was later referred to as a “social riot,” rather than the race riot that occurred in 1943, some members of the press and radio referred to the event as such (Widick 167). In the shock of the events, most Detroiters succumbed to old fears and prejudices, and panic and ignorance, mixed with hate and disbelief gripped the city (Widick 168). Efforts on the part of Detroit’s top black leaders to dampen the riot failed. When the meaning of the riot and the powerlessness of the black leadership became clear, Michigan National Guardsmen were called in to restore order in Detroit. The National Guard Armory, located on Eight Mile Road in Oak Park, was the base of the Guard’s operation (Douglas).

Aid from the National Guard and police served to further escalate tension and violence in the city. Calling for the aid of state police and the National Guard contained an element of risk, as they were all white (Widick 170). While both city and army authorities acted to try to keep the death toll at a minimum, in both cases their efforts were unsuccessful, and there was unnecessary death (Widick 171). The National Guard was involved in a total of eleven deaths in which nine innocent people died (Widick 171). “Totally inexperienced, and poorly commanded, the Guardsmen did not know whether or not they were fighting an organized enemy, but they assumed, to be safe, that they were; a black man was automatically suspected of being one of ‘them’” (Widick 173).

As evidence of the incompetence of the National Guard mounted, Detroiters cursed the delays in letting the federal troops take over. The U.S. Riot Commission Report states that there were dozens of charges of police brutality, but because precinct commanders were transferred to the riot command post, discipline vanished (105). “Seared in the memory of Detroit’s black population was this breakdown of law and order -- a police department unable to control its own men and pretending otherwise” (Widick 182). The shooting to death of a black youth by an officer and the killing of three blacks who were with two white girls at a motel, which later became the subject of novelist John Hersey’s best seller, *The Algiers Motel Incident*, deepened the animosity between young blacks and the police (Widick 182 - 183). After an all-white jury found the officers not guilty in the motel case, the common perception was that no white policeman would ever be tried and found guilty of murdering a black man caught with a white woman (Widick 184).

The events of that terrible week in Detroit’s history left a trail of hostility between black and white; younger, militant blacks and moderate, middle class blacks; and, Detroit with its entire surrounding areas. Some say that Detroit has yet to heal the wounds of that devastating week in July 1967.

White Flight

Eight Mile Road, which had been a prime shopping district in the 1960s, started to decline in the 1970s. Urban planning studies indicate that major roads like Eight Mile Road serve as emotional barriers (Douglas). Sociologist Robert W. Kahle warns that the fear of crime is a phenomenon distinct from crime itself (1). Kahle’s study on the fear of crime in the neighborhoods of metropolitan Detroit suggests that solely reducing actual

rates of crime may not effectively reduce the fear of crime. “Fear of crime affects a different population than crime itself, is more widespread, is a larger problem in terms of its economic and social consequences and, therefore, requires distinct and specifically targeted policy to ameliorate it” (vi). The study also shows a relationship between the perception that neighbors look out for each other and the feelings of safety and security in one’s home at night (16). Kahle suggests community policing, foot patrols, and ample and reliable lighting as an initial source of policy ideas (16).

In addition to the perception of Detroit as a “high crime” area, the image of topless bars scattered along Eight Mile Road marginalized the roadway. Lax zoning regulations in Detroit allowed topless bars to flourish as thriving businesses, and it wasn’t long before Eight Mile Road became known as “the strip” (Borderline). According to a longtime business owner in the area, vandalism and prostitution continued to grow until the 1990s when residents and business owners became fed up with the continuous decline of the area (Gerritt A9).

Between 1980 and 1992, Wayne County lost over 200,000 residents, which is more than any other county in the nation (Borderline). Soon after, Detroit became known as one of the most segregated cities in the United States. Jerry Herron, Director of the American Studies Program at Wayne State University, offered several explanations for this shift in demographics. Detroit, when compared to other large cities, has a high level of private home ownership. The city has enjoyed a high degree of mobility since the 1920s, and historically, it is a city of neighborhoods and enclaves. Unlike other large cities - such as Chicago and New York, that have a long history of vertical populations -

Detroiters are able to select where they want to live and who they want to live near. If something happens that they don't like, they just move (Borderline).

The city's high degree of mobility contributed to what was perceived as the "white flight" that occurred following the late former Mayor Coleman Young's comment warning criminals to "hit Eight Mile" during his 1974 inauguration address. Some suggest that the movement out of the city began when landmark institutions, such as Northland Mall, opened just outside of the city. Built in 1954, Northland Center is the nation's first planned shopping center, which housed the largest branch of Hudson's department store in the country. Northland was created due to the changing nature and pattern of American life. Cars were more available and expressways were developing. Fields were becoming subdivisions, and bedroom communities were becoming lively towns. Northland was built in its specific location due to the rapid emergence of suburbs (Brown). People began not only shopping in the suburbs, but moving there as well.

Eight Mile Boulevard Association

In 1993, leaders from the three counties and 13 cities and townships along Eight Mile Road helped to form the private, nonprofit Eight Mile Boulevard Association. Since then, new buildings and expansions have added more than 750,000 square feet and more than 1,000 jobs along Eight Mile Road. In 1998, the association finished a \$430,000 project to plant 24 perennial gardens on the Eight Mile Road traffic medians. The project includes installing signs by the gardens that divide municipalities. In 1998, the Michigan Department of Transportation resurfaced 8.7 miles of Eight Mile Road at a cost of \$10 million.

Douglas realizes that Eight Mile Road will never be a Main Street in Royal Oak (referring to the major street running through the trendy downtown area of one of Detroit's most popular neighboring suburbs). Rather, Douglas sees Eight Mile as a significant business road. "It can be a healthy business road by working hard, making money and being an important link to Detroit and the commerce that travels both east and west and north and south. When people perceive Eight Mile as a place that works, then we've done our job" (Douglas in *Borderline*).

It is clear that positive things have been happening on both sides of Eight Mile Road. Crime is down 49% from 1985 in some areas. Each year, businesses participate in the Annual Clean-up Project sponsored by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. Tensions have eased, and many agree that the 1990s will see a change in the image of Eight Mile Road.

Public Relations and Community

Organizations take many steps to ensure that their community relations are strong and on-going. A key principle in public relations is the establishment and maintenance of organizational legitimacy. That is, in order for an organization to survive, it needs to earn, from its various publics, the right to do so. One primary public of any organization is its community, the environment in which it is housed.

An organization's community relations programs may be as diverse as employee recruitment methods, effective employee relations, responsible waste disposal and energy use, attractive design and maintenance of buildings and grounds, ethical marketing and advertising strategies, and corporate philanthropy (Baskin & Aronoff 228-254). In

whatever form, the concept of social responsibility has become widely accepted among enlightened organizations (Seitel 351).

Loss of Community

Some sociologists and political scientists maintain that the sense of community that existed a century ago is no longer common. This is due, they argue, to modern means of communication and transportation (Kruckeberg & Starck 39). People no longer identify with their immediate surroundings. Rather, Americans have been uprooted from rural societies and transformed into a mass society, interconnected by complex communication and transportation networks, but disconnected from their immediate surroundings.

Andrew Kirby (322) takes this notion of being “disconnected” from one another a step further when he argues that Americans have little real grasp of the place of the United States within the international order. Kirby attributes this sense of “localism” as a fundamental tenet of political development. He maintains that since the initial process of social construction took place at the local level, power was rooted in the land and the few urban centers (322). Though the locality lost some of its political importance as the creation of federal government displaced this power upwards, Kirby points out that many national collectivities and organizations are amalgamations of smaller community-based units. The AFL-CIO, for example, is in really composed of many “locals.” Within these various locals, Kirby argues, is a potential to fragment over particular issues. Consequently, there is a basic social and political tension between the roots of localism and the ideals of nationalism. Americans, then, have no real sense of universalism, or insight into the ways in which the world fits together (322).

Kirby maintains that the existence of social and geographical differentiation within societies across the United States has left Americans with no real sense of national uniformity. “We find innumerable variations: in terms of religious commitment, attitudes to economic development, housing and architecture, and cultural practice, all of which contribute to local knowledge” (323).

Locality then, as defined by Kirby, is an arena for a recognizable set of social practices (324). This is to be distinguished from his definition of community, which is regarded as a more dubious construct. Kirby argues that the term “community” is a construct replete with numerous ideological overtones. A community is an organic relation dependent upon stability and harmony (324). A locality is the locus of resource consumption, and the political struggles that attempt to capture these resources indicate the vigor of local social affairs. Kirby maintains that although we live in a global economy, there remain important differences between localities. These differences provide opportunities to shape local economic development strategies and to initiate social movements that initially operate at the local level. The locality, then, is the arena within which social affairs are resolved. Kirby argues that it is this collective action at the local level that gets issues like peace and abortion placed upon the national political agenda (324).

Kirby maintains that we do not need to assume community in order to infer that localities are of importance. He argues that we should look to the term “locality,” which allows us to see “tensions, frictions, changes, growth, and decay as a part of the everyday social relations that are in evidence there” (325).

One way in which the contradictions between localities are resolved is through the local media of communication. Joshua Meyrowitz maintains that although we are dependent upon the nature of a specific locality and that our physical locales are constant, the story of evolving conceptions of identity and community cannot be told by them (327). Meyrowitz argues that although all experience is indeed local, people do not always make sense of the world from a purely local perspective: “Changes in means of production, bureaucracy, forms of transportation, and forms of communication alter our relationship to local place” (327).

Meyrowitz argues against Kirby’s insistence on the consistent primacy of locality in experience. Meyrowitz points out that social-psychological factors make human experience unique and that communication patterns shape and reshape social identities and perceptions of localities (327). Meyrowitz looks to the works of Charles Horton Cooley (1922/1964) and George Herbert Mead (1934) in his argument that our selves are not defined by the physical boundaries of our bodies. Rather, the self is a reflected concept; it develops as we come to see ourselves as social objects (327). Cooley refers to this as “the looking glass self,” which Mead speaks of “the generalized other” from whose perspective we view and judge our own behavior.

Meyrowitz takes the notion of the generalized other and relates it to the media and the community in two ways. The media has extended the “generalized other” to include people from other communities and localities, whom also serve as self-mirrors. Also, media expand our perception of the “generalized other” which we use as a mirror in which to view and judge the locality itself (327).

Meyrowitz continues to argue against Kirby's more objective understanding of the construct of locality by pointing to the significant influence of television in changing perceptions and structures of local unions and political party organizations. "There has been a shift from party politics to candidate-centered politics and from locality-based political organizations to political action committee politics (organized through the telephone, direct mail, and the computer, not the neighborhoods)" (328). Additionally, Meyrowitz notes that there has been a rise in the number of political independents, a decrease in the degree of loyalty that still-affiliated voters feel to the traditional political parties, and an accompanying dramatic increase in ticket-splitting and in victories for party outsiders.

Meyrowitz maintains that the locality is no longer necessarily seen as the center stage of life's drama (330). Societies are no longer limited to the traditional locality-bound systems of interaction. Rather, the more our sense of self and experience are linked to interactions through media, the more our physical locale becomes a backdrop for these other experiences. While Meyrowitz acknowledges that locality remains a vital component of social life, he challenges us to look at the changing structure of localities as communication systems.

Chicago School Scholars

Sociologists associated with the University of Chicago were perhaps the first scholars to express a concern about loss of community. Most influential and productive between 1892 and about 1939, this group of sociologists -- including John Dewey, George Herbert Mead and W.I. Thomas (to name a few) -- became collectively known as the "Chicago School" because of their common interests and because all but Charles

Horton Cooley (a University of Michigan professor) spent much of their academic careers at the University of Chicago. In addition, many used the City of Chicago as a laboratory for their study of society (Kruckeberg & Starck 28).

These scholars shared the belief that the loss of community experienced at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was exemplified through modern means of communication and transportation and through industrialization and urbanization (Kruckeberg & Starck 29). Their intent was to restore this loss through the very means by which it was originally lost -- communication. Kruckeberg and Starck use the Chicago School's attempts to utilize new technology to open up new channels of communication as a theoretical framework from which contemporary public relations practitioners can achieve better community relations. Ultimately, Kruckeberg and Starck believe that the primary goal of contemporary public relations practitioners should be to restore and maintain community, to take us back to the America of the mid 1800s, idealized by scholars of the Chicago School.

Ernest Watson Burgess, another member of the Chicago School, argues that an individual is not a member of a community because he/she lives there but rather because, and to the extent that, he/she participates in the common life of the community (Burgess 18-19). Further, he maintains that people do not become a community merely because they live in physical proximity. Rather, community is achieved when people are aware of and interested in common ends and regulate their activity in view of those ends. Communication, Burgess argues, plays a vital role as people try to regulate activities and participate in efforts to reach common ends. In a similar vein, Mead believed that the selfhood of a community depends on organization, so that the common good becomes the

end goal of individuals in the community. The organization of the community depends on individuals adopting the attitude of other individuals, which Mead refers to as the “generalized other” (Kruckeberg & Starck 55).

Robert E. Park, also of the Chicago School, noted that because humans need the company of each other, individuals find themselves at home in their community only gradually as they succeed in accommodating themselves to the larger group, incorporating into the specific purposes of the society in which they live (Kruckeberg & Starck 55). Further, Mead observed that, until people can respond to themselves as the community responds to them, they do not genuinely belong to the community (Kruckeberg & Starck 55).

Scholars in the Chicago School were perhaps the first to consider collectively and systematically the role of communication in society (Kruckeberg & Starck 37). Dewey saw communication as an opportunity to enhance society, and as a means for establishing cooperation, domination and order (Kruckeberg & Starck 59). James Carey noted that this belief in communication as the cohesive force in society was part of the progressive creed (Kruckeberg & Starck 62). Much like the Chicago School’s view of communication, Carey believes that the widespread social interest in communication today derives from a derangement in our models of communication and community. This he attributes to what he refers to as an obsessive commitment to a transmission view of communication. The transmission view of communication connotes doing something communicatively to someone else, such as persuading or advocating, rather than doing something with someone, sometimes referred to as the “ritual” model of communication (Kruckeberg & Starck 62).

Kruckeberg and Starck maintain that the field of public relations adopted and has continued to apply the transmission model of communication. They argue that modern public relations practitioners apply principles that are rooted in persuasion and advocacy rather than principles based on social involvement and participation (63).

By the early 1900's, Americans were being transformed into a mass society interconnected by sophisticated communication and transportation. This broadened the structures of community life, as people no longer identified only with their immediate "neighborhoods." Additionally, the economy globalized as dependency on the regional, national and international marketplace replaced the self-sufficiency of the villages. Kruckeberg and Starck argue that this nationalization of communication and transportation systems was largely responsible for mass culture (39).

Kruckeberg and Starck believe that the need for modern public relations evolved as a result of these social factors (41). They argue that most of the concerns of public relations practitioners today simply did not exist before the loss of community. Public relations used to be concerned primarily with acquiring political power or material gain, with the contemporary goals of persuasion and advocacy left to politicians and the government. Today, public relations practitioners concern themselves primarily with relationships between and among groups and with solving problems usually related to communication (43). In short, public relations came about to put people back in touch with each other, their institutions and their environments.

The sense of community once enjoyed by more rural villages no longer exists. Industrialization and urbanization during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries featured modern means of communication and transportation.

Americans became a mass society interconnected by a maze of communication and transportation that yielded both blessings and curses (Kruckeberg & Starck 38). People no longer felt connected to their immediate “neighborhood.” The nationalization of communication and transportation systems was largely responsible for mass culture (Kruckeberg & Starck 39).

Sociologists, particularly the Chicago School, attempted to restore this loss through the very means by which it was originally lost -- communication. Kruckeberg and Starck argue that these attempts to utilize new technology to open up new channels of communication is an appropriate theoretical framework from which contemporary public relations practitioners can achieve better community relations. Ultimately, Kruckeberg and Starck believe that the primary goal of contemporary public relations practitioners should be to restore and maintain community.

Modern public relations evolved as an attempt to put people back in touch with each other and their environments. Rather than using public relations as a means to acquire political power, modern public relations practitioners concern themselves primarily with relationships between and among groups and with solving problems usually related to communication (43). Modern public relations practitioners apply principles that are rooted in persuasion and advocacy rather than principles based on social involvement and participation in order to achieve this goal (63).

The Eight Mile Road Community

Neighborhoods did not historically develop along Eight Mile Road. Rather, they developed on side streets to the north and south of Eight Mile Road. The earliest developments along Eight Mile Road were located at the ends of these north-south side

streets and were primarily service-oriented businesses such as dry cleaners, smaller grocery stores and car service garages. Residents conveniently walked to these businesses.

Homes that developed to the north and south of Eight Mile Road eventually developed into communities with identifiable names such as “Lochmoor on the Lake” and “Maple Park” subdivisions. This suggests that residents saw themselves as belonging to a specific community. Eight Mile Road itself, however, was seen then, as it is today, primarily as a convenient, industrial roadway on which people travel, work, shop and recreate.

Historically, Eight Mile Road served as a convenient east to west roadway, reflecting through the years the many hardships that Detroit and its neighboring suburbs suffered. It was not until 1993 that residents and business owners joined forces to better the conditions on Eight Mile Road. The 8MBA perceived Eight Mile Road not as a border but rather as a “joiner.” They identified an opportunity to make this historical and densely traveled roadway a significant, symbolic mark in the community.

The 8MBA, through its mission to revitalize and promote the Eight Mile Road transportation, business and residential corridor by linking the efforts of the public and private sectors, is attempting to practice modern public relations as identified by Kruckeberg and Starck. Through its on-going programs and efforts such as improving bus stops, planting median gardens, prostitution and drug sweeps, fundraisers (such as the annual silent auction) and the annual Eight Mile Clean Team, 8MBA is attempting to put people back in touch with each other and their environments.

The 8MBA is committed to its community as well as to the realization that organizations can have a significant impact on their local communities. This nonprofit association clearly concerns itself with what Kruckeberg and Starck identify as relationships between and among groups and with solving problems usually related to communication, and they use principles rooted in persuasion and advocacy to do it. Eight Mile Road, in the next decade, just might begin reflecting the sense of community enjoyed earlier only by neighborhoods located on either side.

CHAPTER THREE

THE 8MBA'S COMMUNITY RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

The general strategy of the 8MBA's community relations program was to conduct a comprehensive, intense campaign over a six-month period using key words that symbolize the vision of 8MBA. The key terms chosen for the campaign were based on the results of the cluster analysis of the pre-campaign community feedback sessions. Cluster analysis of the community feedback sessions revealed key terms used by those in the community. Executive Director Sharlan Douglas chose the key terms for the campaign to either counter negative terms revealed in the pre-campaign cluster analysis or to reinforce positive ones.

Research prior to the community relations campaign was composed of two parts; rhetorical and traditional. Research for the rhetorical aspect of the campaign applied Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis to newspaper clippings from Detroit area media from the year prior to the launch of the campaign and also applied cluster analysis to the discourse of community feedback sessions held in Warren and Detroit. This was an attempt to see how both the media and the community were currently "talking" about Eight Mile Road. Cluster analysis provided specific words and clusters of words that were used by both the media and the people when describing Eight Mile Road. Once revealed, those words directly impacted the design of the campaign. Key words of the community relations campaign were selected to either counteract the existing "undesirable" words or to highlight and further push those words that are desirable.

Traditional pre-campaign research, which is more general, was drawn from preexisting data at 8MBA. The executive director of 8MBA, along with various

governing committees (Board of Directors, Advisory Directors, Planning Advisory Council, Business Advisory Council and Member Services Committee) had targeted the following groups as the significant publics of the 8MBA: business owners and managers, property owners, nearby residents, neighborhood block club groups, and passers-by. The community relations campaign, which is the focus of this study, addressed these same publics.

The 8MBA has informally monitored publicity, and developed relationships with various civic groups, community activists, businesses, and city officials since its inception. They have also conducted formal marketing surveys, such as the Business Profile Study, conducted by Market Opinion Research Planning, hired by the 8MBA. This study was conducted in fall 1995 to identify the nature of businesses on Eight Mile Road and what they expected from the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. Feedback from these various channels was considered when developing strategies for this community relations campaign.

Preliminary Research: Community Feedback Sessions

The major research question explored in this dissertation was: How effective is the use of ideographs in a community relations campaign in impacting the way people talk about Eight Mile Road? More specifically, this study sought to determine how effective the use of ideographs is in redefining a symbolic marker such as Eight Mile Road.

Selected groups of people from various psychographic and demographic backgrounds, yet from the same geographical area, were asked open-ended questions about Eight Mile Road.

The artifact analyzed was the discourse of these two community feedback sessions. The two sessions (one in Warren and one in Detroit) were held as part of the pre-campaign research. There were eight to ten participants in each session. The participants included residents, business owners, clergy and community activists from each city.

The units of analysis provided by cluster criticism are the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs spoken by the participants that are analyzed in order to discover which terms seem to be central. Each session was conducted by the executive director of 8MBA and guided by carefully worded, open-ended questions regarding various aspects of Eight Mile Road. The researcher for this study was present during all sessions.

The topics and issues of concern revealed in the Business Profile Study guided the development of questions used in the community feedback sessions. In addition, Executive Director Sharlan Douglas supplemented the conclusions of the Business Profile Study with her own insights into the concerns and issues of those living and working on Eight Mile Road. Each community feedback session, which lasted approximately 75 minutes, was audio taped for analysis. The questions used are shown in Figure 6.

This section identifies key terms used in each session, charts the terms that cluster around the key terms, and identifies patterns in the clusters to determine the essential meanings of the key terms.

Cluster analysis of the community feedback sessions in Warren and Detroit revealed many differences between the two groups. The differences in tone and discourse were significant enough that, for purposes of this discussion, each session will be treated

1. **(general in nature)**
 - When you think of Eight Mile, what image or few words come to mind?
2. **(addresses transportation/traffic issue)**
 - Describe a recent experience that is typical of your travel on Eight Mile Road.
3. **(addresses issue of blight)**

Will need to set up the question: i.e. “ Think for a minute about chain stores and restaurants -- for instance, Kmart or Elias Brothers Restaurant.”

 - How well are businesses kept up on Eight Mile Road as compared to those same businesses located elsewhere in the immediate metropolitan area?
 - Why do you think this is true?
4. **(addresses issue of crime/safety)**
 - To what extent if any is crime a concern to you when shopping or traveling in the Eight Mile area?
 - Is your concern for crime greater when shopping or traveling in the Eight mile area than in other parts of the city or suburbs?
5. **(addresses “border” image)**
 - Does Eight Mile Road have any symbolic meaning to you?
 - Some people think that Eight Mile Road is significant because of race. Why do you think that is so?
6. **(addresses business issues)**
 - How likely are you to patronize businesses on Eight Mile Road? Why?
 - Describe your latest shopping experience on Eight Mile Road.
7. **(addresses issue of optimism and hope for renewal)**
 - Do you believe that Eight Mile Road has the potential to become an attractive Main Street?
 - What, if any, impact will Detroit’s current administration have in the relationship between city and suburbs?
8. **(in conclusion...)**
 - When you answered these questions regarding Eight Mile Road, what areas of Eight Mile Road were you referring to?

Fig. 6. Questions Used in Community Feedback Sessions

separately. In each case, the audiotape was reviewed and analyzed using cluster analysis.

Key terms and their associational clusters were chosen.

The following Table displays the key terms revealed after applying cluster analysis to the community feedback sessions in Warren and Detroit as part of the pre-campaign research.

Table 1

Key Terms Revealed in Pre-Campaign Community Feedback Sessions

<u>Warren</u>	<u>Detroit</u>
Businesses Unkempt	Home
Location	Litter
External Support	Border
Dividing Line	Prostitution
Unsafe	Shopping
Convenient	

Warren Community Feedback Session

This session was held on July 9, 1996, at the Disabled Veteran's Hall (DAV 127), located on the corner of Eight Mile Road and Van Dyke Avenue in Warren and lasted 90 minutes. The nine participants included: (1) a retired, male teacher from Fitzgerald High School (one school attended by those students who live in the target area of this study), he is also active within the Polish community; (2) the female vice president of a bank located on Eight Mile Road who has been employed at the bank for 25 years; (3) a female senior citizen, who is a long-time resident of a neighborhood in the target area; (4) a young mother of two children who was raised in the target area, currently resides

there, and is president of her neighborhood homeowners association; (5) The Commander of the DAV chapter at which the group met; (6) a male resident actively involved in community development; (7) a female resident involved in community development; (8) a male member of the Fitzgerald Board of Education; and (9) the self-employed owner of a business located on the portion of Eight Mile Road included in the study area. A partial transcript of this session is shown in Figure 7 (see next page).

Key Terms and Charting of Clusters

Analysis of the discourse of Warren's community feedback session revealed six key terms with associational clusters. The key terms are: *Businesses Unkempt*; *Location*; *External Support*; *Dividing Line*; *Unsafe*; and *Convenient*.

Businesses Unkempt. The discussion revealed a perception that many businesses located on Eight Mile Road were dirty, had foul odors, and were generally run down. Service was not friendly or helpful. Other terms that clustered around this key term are "always out of stock," "litter," "dirty," "bad attitude," and "unorganized."

Location. Participants felt that conditions on Eight Mile Road change drastically from city to city. Specifically, conditions worsen once one travels east of Woodward. Those terms clustering around this key term are "depends on where you are," "regional," and "east side."

External Support. This term refers to participants calling for more police and city involvement in the problems that plague Eight Mile Road. Some felt that more ordinances and regulations would control irresponsible business owners and keep vagrants from selling goods and services. More police activity and better lighting funded

- Mod: "Describe your latest shopping experience on Eight Mile Road, if there is one."
- Mod: "O.K. What was your experience?"
- P#1: "Builders Square a couple of weeks ago"
- P#1: "Nobody over there knows what they are doing. They don't even know where everything is in the store. And that store is not set up like the store is where I live."
- Mod: "How so?"
- P#1: "Things are in different places. If you go into a Kmart store, everything is in the same place. If you go into a Target store, I don't care where it's at....California or here, everything is in the same place. Well, Builders Square is like that except for this one. (inaudible..) wasn't bad, I got what I wanted and got out of there."
- P#2: "I went to the automotive store and they didn't have what was on sale. And they had it in several papers."
- P#3: "Perry's" (referring to her earlier response to a question in which she described someone getting shot while she was shopping at the 24 hour Perry's on Eight Mile Road by her home).
- P#4: "I haven't shopped on Eight Mile Road in nine years."
- P#5: "About a month ago I went over there to Denny's and I didn't have any problems, I didn't see anything unusual over there. But then again, anytime I go over there to Builders Square or Target I don't have any problems."
- P#6: "What's that tile place up there on Eight Mile Road? I remember shopping there a couple of years ago and I kept looking outside on Eight Mile to make sure my car was still there."
- P#7 "I get gas right over here, and my boys all come over here. A lot of them shop over at BelAir and they have no problems. I won't go there at night (the gas station) because this one over here has been held up three times in the past month."
- P#5: "I go to the Marathon station all the time and I don't have any problems."
- P#8: "The gas station. Other than that, they had chain stores -- Dequindre, Conant, Eight Mile, they closed those around seven or eight years ago."
- P#7: "During the day, I have no problem going shopping or even early evening. I travel by myself. Well, I mean I go to BelAir shopping center, or any of those."

Fig. 7. Partial Transcript of Warren Community Feedback Session

through the cities would deter crime. Clusters around this key term include *“more police presence,” “more ordinances,” “better lighting,”* and *“more responsible business owners.”*

Dividing Line. This refers to the perception that Eight Mile Road separates two sets of conditions; one to the north of Eight Mile Road and the other to the south. Terms clustering around this key term are *“city and suburb,” “crime,” “black and white,”* and *“reputation.”*

Unsafe. This term refers to the level of personal safety perceived by participants. Those terms clustering around this key term include *“travel,” “carjackings,” “watch yourself and purse,” “shootings,” “stabblings,”* and *“drug dealing.”*

Convenient. The key term addresses the availability and practicality of products and services located on Eight Mile Road. Clusters around this key term include *“gas cheap,” “work on,” “fast travel,”* and *“from here to there.”*

Patterns in the Clusters

For the most part, people in the Warren community feedback session were more skeptical of and less optimistic about the condition of Eight Mile Road than were participants in the Detroit session. In general, they were not pleased with the businesses located on Eight Mile Road. One woman, who complained of shootings and stabblings at the Perry Drug Store on Eight Mile Road that is near her home, said “I will take the extra 45 minutes to go up to the Perry’s on 12 Mile rather than go to the one on Eight Mile Road.”

Another participant explained how Kmart locations nationwide tend to organize their stores the same way. The Kmart on Eight Mile Road, however, is organized differently. Other participants agreed and added that the same is true with Builders

Square and Target. They also felt that these chain stores located on Eight Mile Road tend to be out of sale stock and pile the merchandise that they do have in the aisles, rather than neatly stacking it on shelves. Others said that stores are dirtier and the salespersons unfriendly and unhelpful. When discussing litter, the group reflected a more general tone of skepticism, saying that “People have no respect for anything anymore.” One woman wondered why she should take a chance and shop Eight Mile with all the “juvenile delinquents” around. They said these same conditions exist in chain restaurants and fast food establishments located along Eight Mile Road.

Solutions to complaints offered by the group consistently placed responsibility on someone else or some other place. By complaining only about conditions of businesses, such as appearance and service, the group seemed to place blame on business owners. They suggested that business owners needed to be more responsible by making their businesses more attractive on the outside. This way, the business would be more inviting and appear safer. Participants clearly associated the term “*Unkempt*” with “*Unsafe*.” When discussing the external conditions of the businesses, such as litter and bars on the windows, they mentioned fearing for their personal safety. The discourse quickly moved into the subjects of carjackings, shootings, drug activity and stabbings. This suggests that to this group, *Unkempt* equals *Unsafe*.

The group noted that feeling unsafe increased or decreased depending on the part of Eight Mile Road that you were on. They tended to view western Eight Mile Road (west of I-75) as much cleaner and safer than eastern Eight Mile Road. “The eastern part of Eight Mile Road is unsafe and chaotic,” said one participant. “The western part, from Southfield west, is very nice.” Another member said that he will go to some stores

located on Eight Mile, but not others. He said that it depended on which portion of Eight Mile Road the store was located.

All participants agreed that Eight Mile Road is convenient. Travel was quick and gas was cheap, but you had to be cautious. One participant travels Eight Mile Road every day to and from work. "I travel 65 m.p.h. with my doors locked and I don't stop," she said. One participant said the gas station she uses on Eight Mile Road has the cheapest gas available. She won't stop there at night, however, because the station was held up three times in the last month. Although there is a safety concern, most agreed that people do use Eight Mile Road out of convenience. "I think 90% of the people that travel Eight Mile Road just use it to get from here to there," one participant said.

The answer to most of the concerns of these participants was more external support. They called for more police presence. This might deter prostitution activity, and it might also scare away prospective criminals. Also, more ordinances and stronger law enforcement would keep the vagrants away. Better lighting would serve the same purpose. The folks that beg for money, sell flowers, or ask to wash your windows were described as irritating. Every solution offered by the group placed responsibility on someone else. It was clear that these people did not feel a sense of empowerment. However, they perceived the authorities as having the power to reestablish control in the area.

Participants also said that Eight Mile Road is a dividing line. One member stated that Eight Mile Road is an historical dividing line, the "historical base line." All agreed that most viewed Eight Mile Road as a geographical marker, namely, the division between the city of Detroit and its northern suburbs. They did, however, note that some

people perceive Eight Mile Road as more than that. “Some people feel that this side is OK and that side is not.” A retired teacher noted that in his school, the thinking was as follows: “If you don’t like it over here, go over there.” He added that former Mayor Coleman Young stressed the idea of Eight Mile Road being a dividing line when, during his first inaugural speech in 1974, he warned criminals to “Hit Eight Mile Road.” Participants recalled how this comment was picked up and used over and over again by Detroit area media.

Detroit Community Feedback Session

This session took place on July 10, 1996, at the 12th Precinct of the Detroit Police Department, located on West Seven Mile Road in Detroit. The session lasted approximately 90 minutes. The eight participants included: (1) a security officer for a medical center located on Eight Mile Road; (2) the priest of a church located on Eight Mile Road and who resides in the rectory, also located on Eight Mile Road; (3) a female Wayne County Community College student who resides in the target area; (4) a female Wayne County Community College student who resides in the study area and volunteers at Saratoga Community Hospital, also located in the target area; (5) a female senior citizen who is a long-time resident and member of a homeowners association in the study area; (6) a female resident who is active in her block club and a member of the Farwell Advisory Council; (7) a male homeowner who is a long-time resident of the target area; and (8) a female resident who is the former president (and current member) of a community association dedicated to improving and beautifying the Van Dyke/Seven Mile Road area.

Key Terms and Charting of Clusters

The cluster analysis of the rhetoric of Detroit's community feedback session revealed five key terms with associational clusters. The key terms are: *Home*; *Litter*; *Border*; *Prostitution*; and *Shopping*.

Home. Several participants referred to Eight Mile Road as their home. They were born in Detroit, grew up in Detroit, and raised their families in Detroit. Eight Mile Road has always represented "home" to them. Terms clustering around this key term are "community," "diverse," "neighborhood" and "responsibility."

Litter. This term refers to the amount of trash located on the grounds of businesses and residents located on Eight Mile Road. Clustered around this key term were the words "debris" and "dirty" as well as the phrase "people don't care."

Border. This key term refers to both the perception of Eight Mile Road as a border between two different sets of conditions and its geographical significance as a legal marker. Other terms clustering around this key term are "divides," "white flight," "city from suburbs" and "improving."

Prostitution. This key term addresses the proliferation of prostitution activity on and around Eight Mile Road. Participants were familiar with what they viewed as a major problem that continues to plague their portion of Eight Mile Road. Clusters around this key term were the phrases "out of control," "empty lots" and "not maintained."

Shopping. This key term refers to the participants' willingness to frequent stores located on Eight Mile Road. This term also takes into account participants' specific experiences while shopping on Eight Mile Road. Terms clustering around this key term were "loyalty," "maintenance," "dirty" and "attitude."

Patterns in the Clusters

The term *Home* may be considered a God term for this group. They were optimistic and proud. The associational terms, such as *community* and *diversity*, were clearly considered appealing characteristics of their portion of Eight Mile Road. Although Eight Mile Road was a border between city and suburbs and the city did experience a white flight, this was changing. This may explain the group's overall sense of personal responsibility for the maintenance and betterment of Eight Mile Road.

Unlike Warren residents, the Detroit group discussed at length ways in which they could personally resolve some of Eight Mile's problems. They mentioned confronting litterers, calling in the license numbers of "johns" and making phone calls and requests to the city as well as an understanding that residents can make a difference, rather than counting on the police. In general, this group reflected a sense of empowerment, optimism and commitment. This is in contrast to the Warren participants' tendency to place responsibility and control in authority's hands. This difference suggests that those who feel in control of their own environment tend to be more optimistic and hopeful than those who do not feel empowered.

Prostitution and other crimes were a concern for this group. Residents did not fear for their personal safety, however. Rather, they were more concerned with the appearance and upkeep of the area.

The Detroit group wanted to shop in Detroit. Keeping their money in the city was mentioned quite often. They did, however, provide examples of undesirable shopping. Their suggestion was to confront business owners and demand change. They also mentioned desirable shopping establishments such as smaller, family owned businesses.

Preliminary Research: Media Coverage

Preliminary research also included cluster analysis of Detroit area newspaper coverage prior to the campaign. This portion of the rhetorical analysis looks at how the media refer to Eight Mile Road. More specifically, it seeks to determine the contexts in which the Detroit-area print media refer to Eight Mile Road. The artifacts to be analyzed are those newspaper articles that refer to Eight Mile Road that appeared in print during the period of June 1995 through June 1996.

A search via the Lexis/Nexis system at the Purdy/Kresge Library produced more than 140 newspaper clips from the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* that referred to Eight Mile Road from the months of June 1995 through June 1996. Research also included analysis of media clippings from the 8MBA that included selected Detroit area dailies and smaller suburban papers not indexed by the Lexis/Nexis system.

This unit of analysis provided by cluster criticism are the written words, sentences and paragraphs that create the contexts in which Eight Mile Road is referenced. The terms “Eight Mile” and “Eight Mile Road” were entered in the Lexis/Nexis program to reveal all instances in which the terms were mentioned. This search revealed 144 stories that mentioned either term. All references were then categorized according to context.

This section will identify key contexts in which Eight Mile Road is referenced, chart the terms that cluster in these key contexts, and discover patterns in the clusters to determine meanings of the key contexts.

Key Contexts and Charting of Clusters

Analysis of the print media coverage of Eight Mile Road during the period between June 1995 through June 1996 revealed six key contexts in which Eight Mile

Road is referred. These contexts are as follows: *Location*; *Crime*; *Topless Bars*; *Revitalization*; *Border*; and *Traffic*.

Location. Articles revealed that many events happen on or near Eight Mile Road. Many articles mentioned the Michigan State Fair and the parade of classic cars that traveled down Eight Mile Road in celebration of the centennial of the automobile. There were also numerous references to businesses that were identified located on Eight Mile Road. "Moss said Utilase wants to open a plant close to the DCT headquarters at Hoover and Eight Mile roads" (*Crain's Detroit Business*, June 5, 1995). Terms that clustered within this context are "*landmark*," "*parade*," "*businesses*," "*car accidents*" and "*real estate*."

Revitalization. Many articles made specific references to various revitalization and expansion projects that were either currently in progress or in the planning stage. Projects were undertaken by both community and business groups. "The nation's largest supermarket chain has 79 stores in Michigan and recently opened a store at Eight Mile Road and Wyoming in Royal Oak Township" (*Crain's Detroit Business*, December 18, 1995). This context also includes causes taken up by area residents. Terms clustering within this key context are "*expansion*," "*renovation*," and "*federal funds*."

Border. This context includes all of the references to Eight Mile Road as being the dividing line between Detroit and its northern suburbs. Additionally, statements regarding the differences between Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and former Mayor Coleman Young fall into this category. Terms clustering within this key context include "*wall*," "*race*," "*change in attitude*," and "*bridge*."

Crime. Prostitution and carjackings are clearly the most well known crimes that occur on Eight Mile Road. They were the typical crimes occurring on Eight Mile Road that received press coverage. Quotations such as “Police have joined other law enforcement agencies in a task force formed to combat carjackings on and around Eight Mile Road” (*Detroit News*, December 26, 1995) and “The victim, a 25-year-old Warren man, told police he solicited the prostitute for sex at the corner of Studebaker and Van Dyke, a half mile north of Eight Mile Road” (*Detroit News*, March 20, 1996) exemplify these concerns. Terms clustering within this key context are “*robberies*,” and “*more police patrols*.”

Traffic. References to Eight Mile Road in this context include new construction projects occurring on Eight Mile Road or the suggestion of Eight Mile Road as an alternate route because of construction projects on area freeways. “Eight Mile Road: Saturday through Tuesday, the westbound lanes from the CSX Railroad bridge to 300 feet west of Center Street will be closed. . .” (*Detroit News*, September 15, 1995) and “Motorists are encouraged to use Eight Mile Road, McNichols, downtown Highland Park and Interstate 94 as alternate routes” (*Detroit News*, April 24, 1996) support this claim. Terms clustering within this key context are “*construction projects*,” and “*alternate route*.”

Topless Bars. Articles in this category refer to residents’ frustration with topless bars located on Eight Mile Road. Articles also address the attempts to close down these topless bars. Terms clustering within this context include “*enforcement of ordinances*” and “*outrage*.”

Patterns in the Clusters

Media coverage suggests that a lot happens on Eight Mile Road. The parade of cars celebrating the centennial of the automobile and the Great American Cruise-In at the Michigan State Fairgrounds, both occurring in June 1996, received extensive coverage, and every article stated that these events were taking place on Eight Mile Road. “On Sunday, a parade will roll down Eight Mile Road, ending up at the fairgrounds” (*Crain’s Detroit Business*, June 17, 1996).

In addition, Eight Mile Road was used frequently as a geographical indicator, such as; “Janet Janiga, owner of the store on Middlebelt, two blocks south of Eight Mile Road, says she’s able to offer customers deep price cuts by being a smart shopper herself,” (*Detroit News*, Feb. 8, 1996). Traffic accidents, new construction projects, local business news and water main breaks were also heavily covered.

The revitalization efforts of businesses and communities located on Eight Mile Road received positive media attention. This coverage included several articles featuring the efforts of the 8MBA and those of its executive director, Sharlan Douglas. “The Eight Mile Boulevard Association has appointed 27 people to its newly created Business Advisory Council,” (*Crain’s Detroit Business*, May 6, 1996). In addition, the *Detroit Free Press* featured Sharlan Douglas in its “Business Monday” section (May 6, 1996). Her profile was cleverly headlined “Road Warrior.” Observations from those interviewed for the article were supportive and encouraging: “She’s brought together community groups, companies and communities to improve the urban condition along this major thoroughfare” (quoting Donn Shelton, communications manager for SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments).

Expansion projects taking place on Eight Mile Road were covered in Detroit area newspapers, “The nation’s largest supermarket chain has 79 stores in Michigan and recently opened a store at Eight Mile Road and Wyoming in Royal Oak Township,” (*Crain’s* December 18, 1995). The *Macomb Daily* ran an article featuring the efforts of the mayors from Eastpointe and Harper Woods to improve the image and appearance of Eight Mile Road. The article, titled “Eight Mile dreaming: Boulevard Association members have renewed vision,” included a large photograph of the two men shaking hands.

Most references to Eight Mile Road as the border between Detroit and its northern suburbs were in articles discussing former Mayor Coleman Young and current Mayor Dennis Archer. “Dennis Archer is bulldozing the wall that Coleman Young built at Eight Mile Road” (*Detroit News*, Jan. 8, 1996) and “The Young administration’s attitude suggested the victims deserved their punishment for venturing across Eight Mile Road” (*Detroit News*, Jan. 31, 1996). Clearly, articles were optimistic about the current administration, and critical of the former one. “Archer seems to understand that many resources that could help Detroit are north of Eight Mile Road” (*Detroit News*, Jan. 7, 1996).

Aside from prostitution and car jacking, topless bars seem to top the list of concerns of residents living on or near Eight Mile Road. “There is a growing grass roots movement in Detroit to clamp down on topless bars, especially those along Eight Mile Road” (*WXYZ*, Feb. 28, 1996).

Coverage of Eight Mile Road crime was generally limited to prostitution and car-jackings. This suggests that these are either the only crimes that occur on Eight Mile

Road, or the ones that most frequently occur. They even provided extensive coverage of one incident that involved both: “Car jacking took an unusual twist in Warren when a prostitute robbed a customer of his car on St. Patrick’s Day” (*Detroit News*, March 20, 1996). Apparently, the victim solicited a prostitute at an intersection a half mile north of Eight Mile Road.

Articles revealed that residents who live on or near Eight Mile Road as well as those people that frequently shop or travel on Eight Mile Road do fear crime and have an increasing intolerance for prostitution and topless bars. These same people, however, appear also to possess a sense of vision and optimism. The intolerance resulted in communities joining together to crack down on prostitution and topless bars. “Besides Eastpointe, the cities of Warren, Oak Park, Hazel Park, Ferndale and Detroit were involved in the collaborative effort to address street walkers and drug dealers,” said Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano (*Macomb Daily*, July 18, 1996). The *Grosse Pointe Times* ran an article titled “Task force forms to tackle Eight Mile crime” that featured this lead: “Eliminating prostitution and drug deals from Eight Mile Road is the goal of a special task force made up of police officers from five communities that border the thoroughfare” (August 7, 1996). The community is excited about Mayor Archer’s plans, and media made some clear attempts to feature those individuals and groups involved in making change.

Development of 8MBA’s Community Relations Campaign

The 8MBA developed and executed a community relations campaign from July 1996 through December 1996. Pre-campaign and post-campaign research was conducted in the months preceding and following those dates (refer to fig. 5). Cluster analysis was

applied to community feedback sessions and media clippings prior to the campaign to discover how people from the community and the media were currently talking about Eight Mile Road. The same cluster analysis method was applied to a different community feedback session and to media clippings gathered during and after the campaign to discover if the ideographs injected into the campaign influenced the way people talked about Eight Mile Road.

After review of the preliminary research discussed above, the 8MBA chose the following words as the campaign's key words: *Clean, Practical, Welcome, Community, Connect, Join Forces, Responsible* and *Hope*. These key terms were chosen to either counter negative terms identified in the cluster analysis or to reinforce those positive terms that were revealed.

The word *Clean* addresses the litter concerns, and *Practical* advances the concept of Eight Mile Road as a source of convenient travel and shopping. The word *Welcome* counteracts the general "stay away" attitude some have about Eight Mile Road. The term *Community* reinforces the idea of Eight Mile Road joining the city with the suburbs rather than dividing them. The same idea determined the words *Connect* and *Join Forces*. The key word *Responsible* pushes the attitude of personal action and concern about Eight Mile Road. It suggests that individuals can and do make a difference. The term *Hope* reinforces the attitude that Eight Mile Road can become a better place to live, work and play.

These key terms were used in all communications throughout the campaign. The terms were used in various publicity efforts such as media releases, radio/television interviews, public service announcements and speaking engagements. The 8MBA's

annual report and quarterly newsletter, "Baseline Report," also reflected these positive key terms. One story in the 8MBA 1996-1997 annual report is titled "Police join forces against prostitution, drugs." Another story in this report is headlined "Businesses clean up" and leads with "In the fall of 1997, businesses and communities took responsibility for cleaning up Eight Mile Road."

Community relations refers to an organization's planned, active, and continuing participation within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the organization and the community (Peak 65). The 8MBA's mission is to revitalize and promote the Eight Mile Road transportation, business and residential corridor by linking the efforts of the public and private sectors. On-going programs and efforts such as improving bus stops, planting median gardens, prostitution and drug sweeps, fundraisers such as the annual silent auction and the annual Eight Mile Clean Team demonstrate 8MBA's commitment to its community as well as its realization that organizations can have a significant impact on their local communities. During fiscal year 1997, the 8MBA welcomed eight private sector representatives to its board of directors. The 8MBA, by successfully linking the private and public sectors, realizes that effective community relations campaigns recognize the interdependence of institutions (Baskin and Aronoff 230).

Community Relations Campaign Objectives

Objectives of the community relations campaign were as follows (Douglas):

- A. To increase retail shopping on Eight Mile Road
- B. To reduce litter

- C. To make the people who work, shop, travel or live on Eight Mile Road feel safer
- D. To increase civic volunteerism among people who live nearby
- E. To increase renovation and redevelopment
- F. To recruit new 8MBA members
- G. To raise \$3,000 from the annual campaign
- H. To enhance the image of 8MBA
- I. To improve travel and transportation

Community Relations Programs

Clean Team Campaign. This program targeted objectives B and E.

It was an effort by the 8MBA and its business advisory council to recruit Eight Mile Road businesses for a corridor-wide clean up on Friday, September 27, 1996. This program worked in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Adopt-a Highway median clean-up campaign. The program also suggested that homeowners and business owners alike use the occasion for bigger improvements. Their efforts might include paint, upgrading signs, repaving a driveway or parking lot or planting grass or perennials. The 8MBA also asked property owners to clean up nearby vacant lots and around vacant buildings.

Police Anti-Prostitution Patrols. This program targeted objective C. The patrols are a result of one of the Police Chief Roundtables, hosted annually by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. It consisted of a series of random sweeps coordinated by the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and six police departments throughout the corridor. Police attempted to ticket johns in the Eight Mile Road area and impound their

cars. Those arrested had to pay \$650 to get their cars back, and their names became part of the public record which could be used in any media publicity.

Annual Report. This publication addressed objectives F, G and H. The 8MBA 's annual report is published in September of each year.

Newsletter. The "Baseline Report" is published quarterly by the 8MBA. Articles for the issues published during this campaign (June, September and December) focused on the following: the Prostitution Sweeps which address objective C; the 8MBA Work Plan, which is the association's comprehensive list of activities for the year, which targets objectives D, F, G H; the Bus Stop Project, which is a coordinated effort between the MDOT, DDOT, SMART, and the 8MBA to make improvements in bus stops throughout the corridor, which targets objectives C and I; and "What's on Eight Mile," a regular feature of the newsletter which mentions interesting things that can be purchased from businesses located on Eight Mile Road.

Confidential Memo to Businesses. This memo was mailed on August 14, 1996, to 1,800 businesses on the Eight Mile Road Corridor (signed by the Business Advisory Council and by Sharlan Douglas, executive director of the 8MBA). This memo served as a warning to business owners regarding the negative impact that the physical appearances of their businesses were having on the public. This included information revealed in the pre-campaign cluster analysis applied to the community feedback sessions. In general, the analysis indicated that people made the assumption that a dirty, unkempt business was an unsafe and undesirable one, and this directly affected their shopping habits.

Widespread Publicity Campaign. This was an on-going effort by the association to receive coverage by Detroit-area media. Specifically, this used a pitch letter and a

phone campaign to obtain feature stories in daily papers, editorials and opinion pieces, and radio and talk show interviews.

New Membership Brochure. The new brochure was developed and distributed to major locations such as city halls and libraries. Brochures were also mailed to all members of 8MBA. This program targeted objective F.

Public Service Announcements. The association relied on personal relationships built with several radio stations and tried to obtain broadcasts of various public service messages.

Speaking Engagements. The association sent promotional letters to civic groups and responded to those groups that called back and expressed an interest. The speaking engagements focused on the mission and activities of 8MBA.

Summary

This community relations campaign, developed and executed by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association, was conducted throughout the months of July 1996 to December 1996. The campaign targeted the area of Eight Mile Road that has the city of Warren to the north and Detroit to the south. All communications throughout the campaign used strategically selected key words that symbolized the vision of 8MBA. All activities supported the 8MBA's mission to revitalize and promote Eight Mile Road.

Pre-campaign research, which included cluster analysis of media clips from Detroit-area media and of community feedback sessions held in Warren and Detroit, revealed that people do "talk" about Eight Mile Road in using powerful and consistent terms. Many of these terms had strong negative connotations. The 8MBA chose key terms for its community relations campaign in an attempt to "replace" these negative

terms with more positive terms. The key terms (ideographs) were integrated into all communications throughout the six-month community relations campaign. Evaluation of the community relations campaign will reveal if the ideographs injected into the campaign influenced the way people talked about Eight Mile Road.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNITY RELATIONS CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

This chapter provides post-campaign research in the form of a traditional and rhetorical evaluation of the 8MBA's community relations campaign. The traditional evaluation will ask if the measurable objectives outlined by the 8MBA at the beginning of the community relations campaign were met. The rhetorical evaluation should reveal if there was any change in the way people "talk" about Eight Mile Road as a result of the campaign.

Direct mail pieces provided opportunities for citizens to participate in the efforts of the 8MBA through volunteerism. They also provided an opportunity to join the 8MBA as an associate member as well as indicate how to request more information about the association. A measure of how many people responded to any of these opportunities can serve as an evaluative tool. Did the campaign meet its set objective for volunteers? How many new associate memberships did the campaign yield?

Speaking engagements provided another opportunity to evaluate the success of the campaign. Did the number of engagements and record of attendance reach the set objectives? How many people requested more information about the association? What was the overall interest level of the citizens in attendance? Lastly, the amount of funds raised throughout the campaign served as an evaluative tool. How much new money became available to the 8MBA as a result of the campaign?

These measures listed are the traditional evaluative measures employed by public relations practitioners. They provide ways for practitioners to objectively measure the success of a public relations campaign.

As Chapter Three indicated, the following words were chosen by the 8MBA as key terms to be injected throughout the execution of the community relations campaign: *Clean, Practical, Welcome, Community, Connect, Join Forces, Responsible* and *Hope*. Cluster analysis will again be applied to two community feedback sessions as well as to media clippings. Newspaper articles from the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* were identified through the Lexis/Nexis system. Articles from other Detroit-area publications, such as the *Macomb Daily*, the *Daily Tribune*, and *Crain's Detroit Business* were gathered by the 8MBA.

The two community feedback sessions (one in Warren, the other in Detroit) will consist of different people than the first sessions, but there will be a similar mix of participants. Media clippings from the months during the campaign will also be analyzed using the cluster analysis method. The rhetorical evaluation should reveal if there was any change in the way people “talk” about Eight Mile Road as a result of the community relations campaign. This rhetorical criticism should also reveal if a rhetorical evaluation is a sensitive indicator of the success of a community relations campaign.

Post-Campaign Research: Traditional Measures

The Clean Team Campaign was an effort by the 8MBA and its business advisory council to recruit Eight Mile Road businesses for a corridor-wide clean up on Friday, September 27, 1996. The program also suggested that home and property owners use the occasion for bigger improvements.

The event received considerable publicity from local media. Eight local newspapers covered the event, and the coverage in the *Detroit Free Press*, *Detroit News* and the *Macomb Daily* included photographs. The *Detroit Free Press*, on a different day,

ran a photograph standing alone. Two radio interviews and one cable television interview were devoted to the Clean Team Campaign.

The *Detroit Free Press* ran a picture of Sharlan Douglas, executive director of 8MBA. The article's headline mentioned the date of the clean up and led with, "Businesses along 8 Mile are hoping to polish their image" (August 28, 1996). A statement attributed to Douglas made the point that people associate litter and crime: "Sharlan Douglas, executive director of the association, said people link litter with crime." The *Observer's* headline read, "Eight Mile cleanup effort draws praise," and continued to relate how the section of Eight Mile Road running through Redford Township has benefited from the beautification activities. The article also stated that Redford has contributed \$1,800 in federal community block grant funds to the program in addition to \$90,000 in business dues, other federal monies and donations.

The *Michigan Chronicle* included references to the findings from the community feedback sessions held for the purposes of this dissertation study: "Two community feedback sessions held earlier this summer with business owners and members of the Eight Mile community determined that specific actions need to be taken to reduce litter and make Eight Mile safer and more attractive" (September 11-17, 1996). Executive Director Sharlan Douglas was quoted in this same article as follows: "We recently conducted some interviews with people who live and work in the Eight Mile community. When we asked them about litter, they talked about crime. When we asked them about crime, they talked about litter."

The police anti-prostitution patrols included a series of random sweeps coordinated by the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and six police departments

throughout the corridor. Ten sweeps took place between late June and mid-August 1996. A total of 267 car seizures and arrests were made.

Each sweep received only post-event publicity, of course, so not to reveal the dates of the random patrols. The *Daily Tribune*, in one article, chronicled the arrests of several prostitutes. The concluding paragraph of the lengthy article states that “By the time the shift ends around 10 p.m., the 38 officers of the task force have impounded more than 50 cars and made as many arrests in narcotic and prostitution stings” (July 18, 1996). The *Daily Tribune* also chose to run a photograph of a “John” (with his back turned to the camera) who had solicited an undercover officer for sex along Eight Mile Road during one of the sweeps (July 17, 1996). The photograph accompanied an article that further explained the random sweeps: “The \$650 the men will have to pay to get the cars back goes into a fund to finance the police operations.” The article mentioned that during the two previous sweeps in the past month (June 28 and July 12), police seized 101 vehicles and issued 64 court appearance tickets. The article also states that “The effort is coordinated by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association, which is an affiliation of 13 communities in three counties bordering Eight Mile.”

The *Detroit Free Press* ran an article using one of the key terms of the community relations campaign. The headline read “Cops target drugs, prostitutes on 8 Mile Road; Wayne County, suburban police join forces” (July 18, 1996).

Post-event publicity for the Clean Team event was impressive. Both major Detroit dailies picked up the event as well as several suburban newspapers. The 8MBA was not only mentioned, but also described in all but one article. Several articles ran photographs, one featuring Executive Director Sharlan Douglas.

The 8MBA's annual report was published in October 1996. Copies were mailed to all members of the association. The report included many uses of key terms chosen for the campaign, such as this sidebar: "Developing Practical Solutions for the Future" (5). Another sentence, "We not only want to make Eight Mile function better for commuters, employees and residents, but also to make it more attractive and welcoming" (3) reflects use of the key term "welcome." The key term "community" is also used in the report, as reflected in this sidebar: "Revitalizing and Promoting the Eight Mile Business Community" (2).

The "Baseline Report," a quarterly newsletter, was published twice during the six months of the campaign being analyzed for this study. The fall and winter issues of the "Baseline Report" included frequent use of the key terms chosen for the campaign. The fall 1996 issue includes headlines such as "Local police departments join forces to sweep prostitution and narcotics off Eight Mile" and "Eight Mile businesses unite to clean up corridor," and articles throughout the newsletter include all of the key terms. The front page of the winter 1996 issue of the "Baseline Report" featured an article titled "Businesses join forces to clean Eight Mile." The article stated that "Despite a deluge of rain, business owners and employees took responsibility for cleaning up around the sidewalks and parking lots of their businesses" (1).

The confidential memo mailed to all businesses along the Eight Mile corridor was signed by the 8MBA Business Advisory Council and by Sharlan Douglas, executive director of 8MBA. Prior to mailing the letter, Douglas presented to the Business Advisory Council some of the pre-campaign cluster analysis research gathered for this study. She intended to convince the council that participants from the community

feedback session associated litter with crime. A clean storefront welcomed customers by appearing safe. Additionally, a clean business relayed the message that the owners cared about the customers. Participants were much more likely to frequent an attractive business.

The council voted to share research from the pre-campaign research with business owners in the form of a letter. The letter was mailed August 23, 1996, approximately one month before the culmination of the “Eight Mile Clean Team” event. Sharlan Douglas took the opportunity to encourage businesses to participate in the clean up by making their establishments more physically attractive.

The letter included several of the key terms chosen for the community relations campaign: “We need to join forces to work to change the negative image that has unfortunately become a reality;” “Meanwhile, we welcome comments and suggestions;” and “People in each group agreed business owners aren’t taking responsibility for their businesses.” Respondents also said that owners and managers must develop a sense of “community” on Eight Mile Road,” and “Their comments suggested that clean and well-kept businesses were safer and more welcoming.”

This was the 8MBA’s first attempt at coordinating a clean-up effort of this magnitude. Douglas regards the event, in which 25 businesses and 250 individuals registered and participated, as a success.

The 8MBA also sent pitch letters to civic groups expressing an interest in speaking about the mission and activities of the association. Speaking engagements were scheduled with those groups that responded to the letter by calling the 8MBA. Executive

Director Sharlan Douglas visited the following groups to share information about the 8MBA:

Macomb County Community Growth Alliance
Thursday, September 5, 1996 7:30 a.m.
Approximately 50 people

Lesure Block Club
Tuesday, September 24, 1996 7:00 p.m.
Approximately 15 people

Warren South Rotary
Wednesday, September 18, 1996 12:00 noon
Approximately 10 people

Most of those in attendance were already interested in the 8MBA, and many were already members. Although participants were alert and interested throughout the presentations, there were no new memberships to report that resulted directly from these several engagements.

Throughout the campaign, the 8MBA conducted a widespread publicity campaign focusing on five aspects of Eight Mile Road. This was an on-going effort to receive coverage from Detroit-area media. Specifically, the association sent out 50 pitch letters to media contacts. In some cases, they sent specific story ideas to specific media. For example, one effort targeted the Homes and Real Estate writers of area newspapers. Titled, "You can build a house with what you find on Eight Mile Road," this story idea featured a list of the cement companies, hardware stores, paint shops, and bricklayers located along the Eight Mile corridor. Another feature story idea focused on the way people who live and work on Eight Mile Road "feel" about its future. Another story angle looked at the 750,000 square feet of business growth on Eight Mile Road. The following interviews were a result of these efforts:

Sharlan Douglas interviewed with Ron Tavernit of WOMC on September 19, 1996 for a Sunday a.m. talk show.

Heather Tiffany, former Project Coordinator at 8MBA, interviewed on WDET 's Welcoming' show at 7:08 a.m. on September 26, 1996.

Sharlan Douglas taped an interview for WWJ AM on August 23, 1996 for air later.

Harvey Curley, (Director-at-Large, 8MBA), taped an interview for Eastpointe cable on September 11, 1996 for air a few weeks later.

Cindy Cooper of WJR interviewed Sharlan Douglas on August 31, 1996

Sharlan Douglas was also interviewed on WWJ on September 30, 1996. She was asked to accompany a reporter for a drive down Eight Mile Road, pointing out significant improvements to the corridor. This interview aired on October 13, 1996.

Post-Campaign Research: Community Feedback Sessions

The major research question explored in this dissertation is as follows: How effective is the use of ideographs in a community relations campaign in changing the way people talk about Eight Mile Road? More specifically, this study seeks to determine the effectiveness of ideographs in redefining a symbolic marker such as Eight Mile Road. Selected groups of people from various psychographic and demographic backgrounds, yet from the same geographical area, were asked open-ended questions about Eight Mile Road. The artifact to be analyzed is the discourse of these two community feedback sessions, held after the conclusion of the community relations campaign. The two sessions (one in Warren and one in Detroit) were held as part of the post-campaign research. The participants included residents, business owners, clergy and community activists from each city.

The units of analysis provided by cluster criticism are the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs spoken by the participants that are analyzed in order to discover which terms seem to be central. Each session was guided by the same carefully-worded, open-ended questions regarding various aspects of Eight Mile Road that were used in the community feedback sessions that were part of the preliminary research for this study (refer to fig. 6). The topics and issues of concern revealed in the Business Profile Study guided the development of questions used in the community feedback sessions. In addition, Executive Director Sharlan Douglas supplemented what the Business Profile Study revealed with her own insights into the concerns and issues of those living and working on Eight Mile Road. Each discussion session, which lasted approximately 75 minutes, was audiotaped for analysis.

Cluster analysis of the community feedback sessions in Warren and Detroit revealed many differences between the two groups. The differences in tone and discourse were significant enough that, for purposes of this dissertation, each session was treated separately. In each case, the audiotape of the entire discussion was reviewed and analyzed using cluster analysis. Key terms and their associational clusters were chosen.

Table 2 on the next page displays the key terms revealed after applying cluster analysis to the community feedback sessions in Warren and Detroit as part of the post-campaign research.

Warren Community Feedback Session

This session was held January 25, 1997, at the offices of the Eight Mile Boulevard Association located at Greenfield and Eight Mile Road in Southfield. The session lasted approximately one hour. The eight participants were as follows: (1) a female long-time

resident active within her community; (2) a male long-time resident who was once a manager of a business located on Eight Mile Road, and is active within his community; (3) a male Michigan state representative who resides in Warren; (4) a male resident who is a member of South Warren Athletic Teams (SWAT); (5) a male, Warren police officer; (6) a female senior citizen who has resided in the study area for 71 years; (7) the male chair of the Warren Crime Commission and a resident of the target area; and (8) a female member of the Warren Chamber of Commerce who is employed in the portion of Eight Mile Road targeted by this study.

Table 2

Key Terms Revealed in Post-Campaign Community Feedback Sessions

<u>Warren</u>	<u>Detroit</u>
Road Conditions	Memories
Shopping	Businesses Inconsistent
Dividing Line	Travel
Crime	Improving
Improve	
Community	

Key Terms and Charting of Clusters

Analysis of the discourse of Warren’s subsequent community feedback session reveals six key terms with associational clusters. The key terms are: *Road conditions*; *Shopping*; *Dividing line*; *Crime*; *Improve*; and *Community*.

Road conditions. Participants said that Eight Mile Road is plagued by heavy traffic and poor pavement. They agreed that although travel along Eight Mile Road is generally

better than the expressway, road conditions are not good. Other terms clustering around this key term are *“poor,” “chuck holes,” “traffic,”* and *“improving.”*

Shopping. This term refers to the willingness of participants to shop on Eight Mile Road as well as their shopping experiences. Clusters around this term include *“less professionalism,” “poor customer service,” “more selection,” “specialty stores,”* and *“management blame.”*

Dividing line. Participants recognized Eight Mile Road as the geographical division between Detroit and its surrounding suburbs. Terms clustering around this key term are *“border,” “black,”* and *“Coleman Young.”*

Crime: This term refers to the level of concern among participants regarding being a victim of crime while traveling or shopping on Eight Mile Road. Clustered around this key term are *“high crime rates,” not too concerned,” “more aware,” “greater,”* and *“higher.”*

Improve: This term refers to the participants’ call for a change in conditions on the Eight Mile corridor. It also includes the perception that conditions have begun to change both in the appearance of Eight Mile Road and in the relationship between city and suburbs. Term clustering around this key term are *“hopeful,” “potential,” “need,”* and *“hard work.”*

Community. Participants believe that the communities need to work together for the common good and that the Archer administration is trying to make this happen. Terms clustering around this key term are *“together,”* and *“Archer.”*

Patterns in the Clusters

Participants in this session of the Warren community feedback session generally described Eight Mile Road as a thriving corridor that needs the attention of its business owners, communities and police force to improve itself. Several participants reflected on what Eight Mile Road used to be. “We had our first date on Eight Mile Road at the State Fair almost 30 years ago,” said one participant. One elderly participant described a “hurt” that she felt when remembering the history of Eight Mile Road. She has been able to witness many changes over the past 70 years. Several others will always remember it as the place on which they were born and reared. One member said it symbolizes “urban decay.” All participants agreed that they would like to see conditions improve.

Foremost were their concerns about poor road conditions and high rates of crime. They characterized Eight Mile Road as heavy with traffic, fast moving and full of chuck holes. They felt conditions were improving rather than worsening, however, and many implied that were conditions better, they might choose to travel Eight Mile Road rather than the expressway. “I wish I would have taken Eight Mile this morning instead of the expressway,” said one participant as the meeting opened.

Members were aware that Eight Mile Road had higher crime rates than those thoroughfares directly to its north. They reported remaining more alert regarding their surroundings while traveling or shopping on Eight Mile Road. Participants did not allow this concern, however, to deter them from shopping at a particular store or looking for a specific product at one of the specialty stores located on Eight Mile Road.

Members agreed that Eight Mile Road offered many opportunities for shopping.

It is the home to many specialty stores that provide unique services or products not readily available in the area chain stores. Even the chain stores, those less physically attractive than its suburban locations, were usually well stocked with items. “You can find what you want in the stores on Eight Mile Road,” said one member. Participants did complain, however, of poor customer service at the stores located on Eight Mile Road. “I believe that you get poorer service than you would at a comparable business located elsewhere,” said one gentleman. Several members blamed management for not caring. One member noted that his shopping experiences have improved over the past 8 to 10 years.

Few mentions were made of Eight Mile Road as a dividing line other than as a geographical marker separating Detroit from its surrounding suburbs. Several members blamed former Detroit mayor Young for polarizing the two areas from each other. “Coleman Young made it the dividing line between north and south...and Dennis Archer is trying to get that perpetuation knocked down,” said one participant. Another member said that since the black population in Detroit has increased over the years, Eight Mile Road has become a borderline with blacks on one side.

There was a tone of optimism when discussing Eight Mile Road’s overall potential. Most mentioned at one time or another throughout the session that Eight Mile Road was beginning to improve. They firmly implied that it is only the continuation of these improvements that will allow Eight Mile Road to recapture some of what it used to mean to its surrounding communities. They said that communities must work together under the Archer administration to create change for the common good.

Participants in this session were “cautiously optimistic.” They were clear in their admonitions regarding the present condition of Eight Mile Road and equally as clear in characterizing the solutions. The communities on both sides of Eight Mile Road, together with the police forces, must work together to continue to improve what was once a thriving, bustling corridor called “home” for many people.

Detroit Community Feedback Session

This session took place on January 25, 1997, at the offices of the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. The session lasted approximately one hour and 15 minutes. The six participants included (1) a female high school student who was born and raised in the study area (resident for 17 years); (2) a female resident who is an active member of her block club; (3) a male Detroit police officer assigned to the target area; (4) a female resident who lived in the study area for 20 years; (5) a Catholic nun from a parish located on Eight Mile Road who is active with the parish youth group; and (6) a female senior citizen who is a long-time resident. For a partial transcript of this session, see Figure 8.

Key Terms and Charting of Clusters

Analysis of the discourse of Detroit’s subsequent community feedback session revealed four key terms with associational clusters. The key terms are: *Memories*; *Businesses inconsistent*; *Travel*; and *Improving*.

Memories: Participants had many stories to share that reflected their lives and experiences related to Eight Mile Road. Stories addressed what life on Eight Mile Road used to be. Terms clustering around this key term are “*good place*,” “*happy*,” “*sad*” and “*neighborhood*.”

- Mod: “What, if any, impact will Detroit’s current administration have in the relationship between city and suburbs?”
- P#1: “But I think the change in administration in Detroit will make a difference. I think that people are beginning to realize that even if they are successful in politics they still have to have the residential areas prospering. If they don’t prosper, then the city is not going to.”
- P#2: “I think Dennis Archer was the best thing that happened to Detroit. I think that he opened a lot of doors. People are willing to work with him because of the type of person he is. I think it’s wonderful. He’s the best thing that happened to Detroit.”
- P#3: “I think the current administration is definitely working to try to create more to draw the suburbs back into Detroit -- like putting new stadiums in, sprucing up the theater district, and everything else. They are trying to create a draw for suburbans to come back into Detroit.”
- P#4: “I think there will be some impact, for sure. I think the suburbs have to do a lot in their own networking and their own board to find ways. I think Detroit has a lot of ways, and just in your example of the police department being so stretched in Detroit, that we are looking for help and the suburbs can’t stay in their own little ghettos and say, well, things are fine in my family so, ya know, I mean stretch, do what it takes to reach out because the people in Detroit put a lot of energy in living in Detroit and somehow I don’t think that same amount of energy is experienced in the suburbs. So don’t measure us equally, or something, and reach out however and to whomever you can.”

Fig. 8. Partial Transcript of Detroit Community Feedback Session

Businesses inconsistent: This term reflects participants' observations that some businesses along Eight Mile Road are welcoming and thriving while others are dirty and not kept up. This term also refers to the differences in appearances of businesses located on each side of Eight Mile Road. Terms clustering around this key term are "*improve,*" "*convenient*" and "*don't care.*"

Travel: All participants experienced traveling on Eight Mile Road. This term refers to perceptions of travelers as well as frequency of travel and willingness to travel on Eight Mile Road. Clusters around this key term include "*clean,*" "*great,*" "*traffic*" and "*busy.*"

Improving: Participants agreed that although conditions on Eight Mile Road have deteriorated over the years, this was now changing. This term refers to the perception that conditions on Eight Mile Road are currently getting better. Terms clustering around this key term are "*work,*" "*energy,*" "*reach out*" and "*residential areas.*"

Patterns in the Clusters

Participants in this session of the Detroit community feedback session had many stories to tell about how life used to be for them while living on or near Eight Mile Road. They referred to these times as "how it used to be." One participant described it as "a place to raise your children." She later said that it is not such a good place anymore: "The gunshots, prostitution, needles and rubbers being found in your neighborhood, it's not a good place anymore." Another member described herself as a happy little girl spending time at the corner party store getting free gum. She characterized her memories as "happy ones." One participant perceived Eight Mile Road as representing many aspects of life. "A lot of life happens on Eight Mile Road - or it did," she commented.

Throughout the session, participants discussed how some businesses on Eight Mile Road appeared thriving and well kept while right next door might be a rundown, unkempt storefront. They described businesses on the Detroit side of Eight Mile Road as closer together and more rundown than their across-the-street neighbors. They felt that it was largely the owners' responsibility to begin caring if they wanted their customers to do the same. Also, participants complained of a lack of commitment from business owners. Some felt that instead of spending money to upgrade appearances, they would just move out of the city. "Business owners here feel as though they can just get by." They applied the term "inconsistency" to residential areas as well. "Some yards are beautifully kept up with a shack next door," one participant said.

Participants were quick to note that Eight Mile Road is a "great road to travel." They characterized Eight Mile Road as a busy but clean thoroughfare that is wide, well lit and much safer than any roads to its south. They said that although they are cautious while making stops while traveling along on Eight Mile Road, they are not any more cautious than they would be on another busy, highly traveled road. Their concern over crime was much more general and did not directly apply to Eight Mile Road. In fact, several participants felt safer on Eight Mile Road than they would if on any of its surrounding streets. "Eight Mile Road is patrolled by both Detroit police and suburban police forces. It's the safest in the area," said one member.

In general, participants felt the conditions on Eight Mile Road are improving. Some related these improvements to the overall improvements being made to the city of Detroit. Mentions included references to new construction, the theater district, new museums and the general mood of optimism brought in with the Archer administration.

“Archer is the best thing that could have happened to Detroit,” said one participant.

Others agreed. While members were agreeing that Detroit needs help in these efforts, one member spoke as if directly addressing the suburbs: “Rather than staying in your own ghettos, stretch, reach out and do what it takes.”

It was clear that participants in this group had experienced Eight Mile Road before it began to deteriorate. They spoke in reflective styles and genuinely appeared sad over their “happy” memories, in contrast to the present. These same participants generated a sense of commitment to the improvement of Eight Mile Road and the city of Detroit. Their hope seemed grounded in their knowledge of what it once meant to them. One member summed sentiment up appropriately when she said, “Detroit people put a lot of energy into living in Detroit.” This energy was evident in this particular community feedback session.

Post-Campaign Research: Media Coverage

Key Contexts and Charting of Clusters

Research of media coverage following the community relations campaign included a search via the Lexis/Nexis system. This system allows one to enter key words or phrases, and then references all newspaper articles, in chronological order, that include the given words or phrases. The particular indexes used for this study produced newspaper clips from the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* that referred to Eight Mile Road from the months of July 1996 through March 1997. Research also included analysis of media clippings from the 8MBA that included some Detroit area dailies and various suburban papers not indexed by the Lexis/Nexis system.

This portion of the rhetorical analysis seeks to determine the contexts in which the Detroit-area print media refer to Eight Mile Road. Analysis of media coverage from July 1996 through March 1997 reveals four contexts in which Eight Mile Road is mentioned. Each key context has additional associational terms that cluster around it. The key contexts are: *Revitalization*; *Community Efforts*; *Division*; and *Business Location*.

Revitalization: This key context refers to the many new developments and revitalization efforts currently taking place on Eight Mile. This includes commercial and residential new development as well as efforts from both homeowners and businesses and to make their establishments more attractive and inviting. Terms clustering around this key context are “development,” “businesses,” and “residential.”

Community Efforts: This context includes the efforts of business owners, police patrols, residents and the Eight Mile Boulevard Association to make positive change as well as oppose moves that do not work toward that end. Associational clusters around this term include “clean-up,” “prostitution,” “crime,” and “race track.”

Division: This term refers to the references to Eight Mile Road as a geographical and racial divider of Detroit from its surrounding suburbs. This includes both positive and negative references to Eight Mile Road as a divider. Clusters around this term are “no longer,” “barriers down” and “uniting.”

Business Location: This context includes all references to Eight Mile Road as a geographical landmark. Many articles, in discussing unrelated topics, describe a business or event as being on or near Eight Mile Road. Associational clusters include “race track.”

Patterns in the Clusters

Media coverage clearly suggests that Eight Mile Road is thriving with development and revitalization efforts. Old businesses are getting new faces, and new businesses are opening from east to west along the Eight Mile Road corridor. “Novi-based JBS Co. will spend between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to upgrade the former westside Chevrolet site on Eight Mile Road near Lahser,” one article boasts (*Detroit News*, Aug. 21, 1996). Another discusses the pent-up demand for retail development within Detroit, “He noted the success of the BelAire Shopping Center on East Eight Mile Road, with retailers such as Target and Toys ‘R Us” (*Crain’s Detroit Business*, Dec. 2, 1996).

Newspaper articles reflect a general tone of optimism and suggest that developments on Eight Mile Road also reflect the revitalization efforts occurring throughout Detroit. “New businesses have sprung up along Wyoming all the way from Grand River to Eight Mile Road. New housing is being built in Southwest Detroit. Supermarket chains are reopening stores in the city” (*Detroit News*, Jan. 1, 1997).

Community and business groups located on and near Eight Mile Road are busy making certain that revitalization efforts remain strong. The “Clean Team” program, coordinated by the 8MBA and business owners located on Eight Mile Road received coverage in both Detroit dailies and the *Macomb Daily*, as well as a segment on the Emmy Award winning “Straight Talk,” hosted by Amyre Makupson of the UPN 50 Ten O’clock News. Headlines such as “Eye on 8 Mile: Local volunteers’ cleanup efforts help in road revitalization,” (*Macomb Daily*, September 29, 1997) suggest a supportive climate from area print media regarding Eight Mile Road’s future.

Local media also covered the prostitution sweeps on Eight Mile Road which were coordinated by the 8MBA in conjunction with various law enforcement agencies. More coverage that reflected positively on the progress taking place on Eight Mile Road include a *Grosse Pointe Times* article on the task force made up of police officers from five communities that border Eight Mile Road. The Eight Mile Boulevard Association coordinated this new effort that places undercover officers in strategic locations to attract “johns” and drug dealers (August 7, 1997).

Unlike previous uses of the term, most references to Eight Mile Road as a “division “ were made within a context that reflected positive change. For example, the *Macomb Daily* ran an editorial titled “Our opinion: The great racial divide that never was,” in its May 3, 1997 edition. The lengthy article salutes the efforts of the 8MBA and concludes that “Eight Mile is no longer that false dividing line of 20 years ago that pitted the city against its suburbs.”

Even when the *Detroit Free Press* ran a critical movie review of a local filmmaker’s documentary titled, “Borderline: the Story of 8 Mile Road,” positive statements were integrated among the negative ones. Sentences such as “Today, we are told, Eight Mile functions as a geographical confirmation of Detroit’s racial and class divisions” are next to phrases describing 8 Mile Road as possessing a “uniquely urban ambiance” (March 27, 1997). This same review discusses how community groups want to close down strip clubs located on Eight Mile Road because of the negative impact they have on the neighborhoods.

Another article, titled “Crossing the Great Divide,” discusses how opponents of a proposed racetrack unite and chip away at the Eight Mile barrier. “For the first time in

recent memory, neighbors on both sides of 8 Mile in this north Detroit corridor are working together,” (*Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 20, 1997).

The print media, reflecting both what it chose to cover as well as how events were covered, was generally positive and optimistic about the future of Eight Mile Road. Headlines were upbeat, statistics were encouraging and community activism seems at an all-time high. Coverage from several suburban papers suggests that, along with Detroit, communities bordering Eight Mile Road have a renewed interest in its recovery.

Summary

This chapter provided post-campaign research in the form of a traditional and rhetorical evaluation of the 8MBA’s community relations campaign. The traditional evaluation asked if the measurable objectives outlined by the 8MBA at the beginning of the community relations campaign were met. It asked if the campaign met its set objective for volunteers, for example, and how many new associate memberships did the campaign yield? It also evaluated the success of the speaking engagements in terms of interest level of attendants and requests for more information about 8MBA. Lastly, the amount of funds raised throughout the campaign served as an evaluative tool. How much new money became available to the 8MBA as a result of the campaign?

The rhetorical evaluation examined if there was any change in the way people “talked” about Eight Mile Road as a result of the campaign. The key terms; *Clean, Practical, Welcome, Community, Connect, Join Forces, Responsible* and *Hope* were injected throughout the execution of the community relations campaign. Cluster analysis was applied to two post-campaign community feedback sessions as well as to media clippings that appeared throughout and following the execution of the community

relations campaign. A comparison of the pre-campaign cluster analysis with the post-campaign cluster analysis provided an opportunity to determine any change in the way people “talked” about Eight Mile Road.

Post-campaign analysis revealed a clear sense of optimism among participants in the community feedback sessions as well as from the media. Participants expressed hopefulness and were generally upbeat about the revitalization of Eight Mile Road and Detroit. Post-campaign analysis revealed that the media was much more likely to cover community activism and revitalization efforts during and after the community relations campaign than it was before the campaign began.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined community relations at two levels. First, rhetorical criticism was used to evaluate the success of a community relations campaign targeted at a six mile stretch of Eight Mile Road between Dequindre and Hayes roads, and from Seven Mile Road to Nine Mile Road in and around Warren and Detroit. This community relations campaign was developed and executed by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA), a non-profit association formed to address the growing concerns of communities located along the roadway.

Rhetorical criticism was applied to the language used in the campaign's various communications to analyze the nature of the symbol production process and its effects. A vocabulary of concepts derived from Michael McGee's discussion of the "ideograph" and the link between rhetoric and ideology was explored. This discussion also drew from concepts developed by Celeste Condit in her examination of the rhetorical constructions of public morality and from C. Jack Orr's framework of the social construction of reality through communication.

Second, this study applied traditional public relations analysis and evaluation techniques to the 8MBA's community relations campaign in an attempt to measure its effectiveness. Standard measures such as community feedback sessions served to indicate current perceptions of Eight Mile Road. A clipping analysis indicated how local and regional media "talk" about Eight Mile Road. Post-campaign research of a similar nature served as a measure of the campaign's overall effectiveness in changing the perceptions of Eight Mile Road through a typical community relations campaign. Other traditional

measures, such as funds raised and increases in membership and volunteerism, also served as evaluative tools.

The review of literature in the initial chapter of this study suggests that we, as human beings, are conditioned to use a certain vocabulary of concepts and that those concepts function to control our behavior and beliefs. It was useful, then, to examine how changing those concepts might influence social change. More specifically, it was interesting to study if changing language references for Eight Mile Road in a community relations campaign had an impact upon changing the way people “talk about” Eight Mile Road.

This study examined the following research questions: (1) How effective is the use of ideographs in a community relations campaign in redefining a symbolic marker such as Eight Mile Road? (2) Can a rhetorical evaluation be a sensitive indicator of the success of a community relations campaign?

Human beings are conditioned to use a certain vocabulary of concepts and those concepts function to control our behavior and beliefs. This study examined the effectiveness of using ideographs, defined by Michael McGee as a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides or excuses for our behavior and belief (6) in the construction of messages in changing the way people “talk about” Eight Mile Road. The second research question asks if a rhetorical analysis is valuable as an indicator of the success or failure of a community relations campaign.

Although specific programs may vary, all types of organizations practice community relations. Every community has a vital stake in the economic health and prosperity of its institutions. Likewise, every organization has a vital stake in the health

of the community in which it is housed (Baskin & Aronoff 272). The relationship, then, is one of mutual interest between organization and community.

Eight Mile Road is unique in that it both divides and joins, two communities that are perceived as separate from one another -- Detroit and its surrounding suburbs. The community relations efforts of the Eight Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA) focused on enhancing the communication between both in hopes of uniting them into a mutually beneficial relationship.

The community relations campaign, developed and executed by the 8MBA, was conducted from July 1996 to December 1996. The campaign targeted a six-mile stretch of Eight Mile Road that has the city of Warren to the north and Detroit to the south. All communication efforts throughout the campaign used strategically selected key words that symbolized the vision of 8MBA. All activities supported the association's mission to revitalize and to promote Eight Mile Road.

The 8MBA chose the following words as the campaign's key words: *Clean, Practical, Welcome, Community, Connect, Join Forces, Responsible* and *Hope*. These key terms were selected to either counter negative terms identified in the pre-campaign cluster analysis or to reinforce those positive terms that were revealed.

These key terms were used in all communications throughout the campaign. The terms were used in publicity efforts such as media releases, radio/television interviews, public service announcements and speaking engagements. The 8MBA's annual report and the quarterly "Baseline Report" newsletter also reflected these positive key terms.

Pre-campaign research was conducted in the months preceding the launch of the community relations campaign. Cluster analysis was applied to pre-campaign community

feedback sessions (one in Warren, the other in Detroit) and to media clippings gathered prior to the campaign to discover how people from the community and the media were currently talking about Eight Mile Road. Newspaper articles from the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* were identified through the Lexis/Nexis system. Articles from other Detroit-area publications, such as the *Macomb Daily*, the *Tribune*, and *Crain's Detroit Business* were available in 8MBA files.

Like the pre-campaign research, evaluation (or post-campaign research) of the community relations campaign was presented in two parts, traditional and rhetorical. Again, a cluster analysis was applied to two community feedback sessions as well as to media clippings. The two community feedback sessions (one in Warren, the other in Detroit) consisted of different people than the first sessions, but included a similar mix of participants. Media clippings from the months during and after the community relations campaign were analyzed using the cluster analysis method. The rhetorical evaluation revealed an influence in the way people “talked” about Eight Mile Road as a result of the campaign. The rhetorical evaluation also suggested that rhetorical evaluative measures are sensitive indicators of the success of a community relations campaign.

Conclusions

Analysis of Warren Community Feedback Sessions

For the most part, people in the pre-campaign Warren community feedback session were more skeptical of and less optimistic about the condition of Eight Mile Road than were participants in the Detroit session. Participants generally described Eight Mile

Road as a thriving corridor that needs the continued attention of its business owners, communities and police force to improve.

A difference in perception toward shopping on Eight Mile Road was evident when comparing responses from the pre-campaign community feedback session and the post-campaign community feedback session. In the pre-campaign group, the discussion revealed the view that many businesses located on Eight Mile Road were dirty, run down and had foul odors. It also revealed a sense that customer service was poor. The post-campaign participants expressed a willingness to shop on Eight Mile Road. Though they still cited poor customer service, they blamed management. There were no terms suggesting the facilities were dirty or physically unappealing. This suggests that participants did feel welcome to travel and shop on what they considered to be a practical and convenient main thoroughfare.

Travelers remain concerned about their safety while on Eight Mile Road. While the pre-campaign participants concluded that travel on Eight Mile Road is convenient, post-campaign participants complained about poor road conditions. Post-campaign participants did indicate that while road conditions were poor, the conditions were improving rather than worsening.

Pre-campaign participants referred to Eight Mile Road as a clearly defined dividing line, separating city from suburbs and black from white. Post-campaign participants, however, believed that conditions were beginning to improve on Eight Mile Road, both in attitude and appearance. Participants expressed hopefulness, and they cited the necessity of the community to join forces in some hard work to overcome the negative image.

Pre-campaign participants felt that more ordinances and city involvement were needed in order to combat the problems that plague Eight Mile Road. Post-campaign participants, however, called for more action at the community level. They felt that people needed to join forces, along with the new Archer administration, to make change. Participants in the post-campaign session were willing to take more personal responsibility in the effort to make change.

Analysis of Detroit Community Feedback Sessions

Participants in the pre-campaign Detroit community feedback session had many stories to tell about how life used to be for them while living on or near Eight Mile Road. They referred to these times as “how it used to be.” Unlike Warren residents, the Detroit group discussed at length ways in which they could personally resolve some of Eight Mile’s problems. They mentioned confronting litterers, calling in the license numbers of “johns” and making phone calls and requests to the city as well as an understanding that residents can make a difference, rather than counting on the police. In general, this group reflected a sense of empowerment, optimism and commitment.

Participants in both pre- and post-community feedback sessions were willing to take personal responsibility for improving their community. This is in contrast to the Warren participants’ early tendency to place responsibility and control in the hands of authority figures. This difference suggests that those who feel in control of their own environment tend to be more optimistic and hopeful than those who do not feel empowered.

Both pre- and post-campaign participants expressed a sense of loyalty to Detroit; it was their home and they had built memories there. Litter on the grounds of businesses was a big concern for pre-campaign participants, while post-campaign participants

charged that only some businesses were littered, while others were quite welcoming. While pre-campaign participants were willing to travel and shop on Eight Mile Road, post-campaign participants described experiences as “clean” and “great.”

Prostitution was a main concern for pre-campaign participants. Some participants described the condition as “out of control.” Post-campaign participants, however, didn’t discuss prostitution. Pre-campaign participants described Eight Mile Road as a border, while post-campaign participants focused on the perception that conditions on Eight Mile Road are improving.

Post-campaign participants’ concern over crime was general in nature and did not directly apply to Eight Mile Road. In fact, several participants felt safer on Eight Mile Road than on any of its surrounding streets. “Eight Mile Road is patrolled by both Detroit police and suburban police forces. It’s the safest in the area,” said one group member.

In general, participants in the both pre- and post-campaign community feedback sessions expressed a sense of hope for the city of Detroit. Participants in the post-campaign session mentioned new construction, the theater district, new museums and the general mood of optimism brought in with the Archer administration. Participants were in clear agreement that Detroit needs help in these efforts and that Detroit must join forces with the suburbs to make this happen. The post-campaign community feedback sessions reflected the impact of the ideographs carefully chosen for this community relations campaign. The key terms “responsible,” “join forces,” and “clean” were revealed throughout the course of the sessions, as was the feeling of “hope” and “community.”

Analysis of Media Coverage

The media, both before and after the campaign, associated the term “revitalization” with Eight Mile Road. Both contexts included residential and business development as well as renovation projects. Also, each analysis concluded that the media often refer to Eight Mile Road as the location for something. The Eight Mile Road reference was most often cited as the geographical landmark for a business.

Before the community relations campaign, the media spent considerable space describing crime that occurred on Eight Mile Road. This diminished after the campaign. Pre-campaign media also covered efforts to close topless bars located on Eight Mile Road. Post-campaign media, however, often discussed or reported community efforts to make positive change along Eight Mile Road. There was no clustering of terms to suggest the proliferation of crime or topless bars. Rather, those terms were used only in reference to efforts to make positive changes.

Media both before and after the campaign referred to Eight Mile Road as a “border” or a “divider.” The difference, however, was in the context, or the terms that clustered around the key term. Pre-campaign media focused more on the recent change in Detroit administration, as well as in racial make-up. Post-campaign media, however, used terms such as “uniting,” “no longer,” and “barriers down.” Post-campaign media coverage also reflected a clear tone of optimism and suggested that developments on Eight Mile Road reflected the revitalization efforts occurring throughout Detroit.

Post-campaign media were generous in their coverage of activism at the community level. The “Clean Team” program, coordinated by the 8MBA and business owners located on Eight Mile Road received coverage in both Detroit daily newspapers

and the *Macomb Daily*, as well as a segment on the Emmy Award winning “Straight Talk,” hosted by Amyre Makupson of the UPN 50 Ten O’clock News. Headlines were generally upbeat and reflected a supportive, hopeful climate from area print media regarding the future of Eight Mile Road.

The media’s decision to provide generous coverage of community activism reflects its support of residents taking personal responsibility for the revitalization of the area surrounding Eight Mile Road. It supports the notion that by joining forces, there is hope for this particular community.

In post-campaign media coverage (unlike previous uses of the term “division”), most references to Eight Mile Road as a “division “ were made within a context that reflected positive change. Articles saluted the various efforts of the 8MBA and community volunteers and concluded that Eight Mile was no longer that false dividing line of 20 years ago.

Post-campaign print media, reflected in both what it chose to cover as well as how events were covered, was generally positive and optimistic about the future of Eight Mile Road. Headlines were upbeat, statistics were encouraging and the level of community activism appeared to be high. Coverage from several suburban papers suggested that, along with Detroit, communities bordering Eight Mile Road have a renewed interest in its recovery.

Evaluation of post-campaign media coverage suggests that the media did use the ideographs that were chosen by the 8MBA for use throughout the community relations campaign. The media was generous in covering revitalization efforts regarding Eight Mile Road and the city of Detroit. Media coverage reflected use of the ideographs as well

as a tone of optimism promoted by them. The media's angle of "hope" and "responsibility at the community level" was especially evident in its coverage of activity on and around Eight Mile Road.

Limitations of this Study

Traditional public relations evaluation techniques measure effects. Traditional measures can indicate an increase in membership or funds raised, for example, but they may not reflect why this was so. Traditional evaluation of a campaign is unable to go beyond objective measures. At times, however, a public relations campaign will attempt to change perception, and traditional evaluation techniques do not tell us whether or not perception has changed. While this study suggests that a rhetorical analysis of a campaign as an evaluative technique does lend some insight into this, a rhetorical critic cannot be certain that the campaign was the only force in shaping perceptions.

An interpretive, rhetorical evaluation method such as Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis does not allow the critic to prove a direct outcome from any one effort. A rhetorical analysis requires the critic to consider other factors - such as current social, economic and political conditions - and examine how they might be affecting the collective perceptions of the community. The author of this study must ask: Do citizens feel better specifically about relations between Detroit and its surrounding suburbs, or are they feeling better about Detroit in general due to the perceptions of a booming economy, the overall drop in crime and unemployment rates, and the optimism of the new administration? With all of these factors at work, it is not possible to prove a direct causal relationship between the campaign's efforts and the outcomes. As in many public relations efforts, direct, causal relationships are difficult, if at all possible, to demonstrate.

A critic must also consider the impact of these conditions on traditional measures of evaluation. Are members contributing more money due to a perception that the organization is doing well and more deserving of support or, because of economic conditions, they have more money to give at this time?

Though a sincere effort on the part of the researcher to identify community feedback session participants from cross sections was made, an additional method might have been useful in assuring a more accurate representation of the area. Though comments from participants were generally consistent with what was identified in media coverage, it is always desirable to have more widespread participation in a study such as this. A community feedback session with more members might be more valuable to a study such as this than a session with a limited number of participants.

Implications for Further Research

In March 1998, the Chairman of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners proposed changing Eight Mile Road's name. "He wants a new image for the road that separates Detroit from its northern suburbs" (Gerritt A1). An article appropriately headlined "The image of 8 Mile as a seedy stretch is changing as tensions and crime ease. Now, folks look to....THE ROAD AHEAD" appeared on the front page of the *Detroit Free Press* in March 1998. In this article, reporter Jeff Gerritt suggests that the image of Eight Mile Road has begun to change. Some see it as a bridge, others as a divide. "Eight Mile is as big - or as little - a divide as people want it to be," said one Detroit resident (Gerritt A9). "I don't see it as a divider, I see it as a bridge, said an owner of a business located on Eight Mile Road. "It's a bridge to all southeast

Michigan,” he said (Gerritt A9). The reporter’s conclusion: Dozens of people who work and live on Eight Mile Road say a name change isn’t needed.

Public Relations and Community

Kruckeberg and Starck argue that the loss of community experienced at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was exemplified through modern means of communication and transportation as well as through industrialization and urbanization (29). Americans were transformed into a mass society interconnected by increasingly sophisticated communication and transportation. Ultimately, Kruckeberg and Starck believe that the primary goal of contemporary public relations practitioners should be to restore and maintain community, much like the America of the mid-1800s, idealized by scholars of the Chicago School. Modern public relations practices, then, may attempt to restore this loss through the very means by which it was originally lost, namely, communication.

Kruckeberg and Starck use the Chicago School’s attempts to utilize new technology to open up new channels of communication as a theoretical framework from which contemporary public relations practitioners can achieve better community relations.

Today, public relations practitioners concern themselves primarily with relationships between and among groups and with solving problems usually related to communication (Kruckeberg and Starck 43). Modern public relations, then, came about to fill a social vacuum created by the disappearance of community. Citizens today need to get back in touch with their changing environment. Community relations programs can serve this purpose.

It can be argued that the 8MBA primarily concerns itself with, as Kruckeberg as Starck refer to it, the relationships between and among groups and with solving problems usually related to communication (43). They attempt to put people back in touch with one other, and with their changing environment. By all accounts, then, the efforts of the 8MBA clearly exemplify the practice of modern public relations.

Joshua Meyrowitz argues that our selves are not defined by the physical boundaries of our bodies. Rather, the self is a reflected concept that develops as we come to see ourselves as social objects (327). Mead's notion of "the generalized other" takes this a step further by suggesting that we view and judge our own behavior from the perspective of, and feedback from, other people (Meyrowitz 327). When Meyrowitz takes this notion of the "generalized other" and relates it to the media and the community, it lends valuable insight into the challenges of developing an effective community relations campaign. The media has extended the "generalized other" to include people from other communities and localities, who also serve as self-mirrors. Also, media expand our perception of the "generalized other" which we use as a mirror in which to view and judge the locality itself (327).

This particular view of community suggests that the media play a significant role in symbolically defining a particular locality for us. Meyrowitz points out the continuing influence that television has in changing perceptions. The same is true for other media. It can be argued that the way in which Detroit area media report activities that occur on and around Eight Mile Road significantly influences the way in which people view Eight Mile Road. Media coverage, in this case, is part of the symbol-creating process that helps create and shape a particular reality.

Both materialists and symbolists agree that human beings collectively think and act differently than human beings in isolation. Both argue that they form a collectivity of thought that evolves into public perception. This public perception, it can be argued, then becomes “reality.” Many rhetorical theorists take this one step further and begin with the premise that reality is socially constructed through communication. They argue that groups create and define their reality through a consensually validated symbol system. This suggests that the strategic use of rhetoric, here defined as symbolic interaction, plays a key role in creating and sustaining reality.

The rapid advancement of technology, along with other modern means of communication has clearly affected this “loss of community” as articulated by Kruckeberg and Starck. But communication is also the vehicle that can help restore a sense of community. If practitioners want to effect change at the community level, they must recognize the significant role of language in creating, sustaining and ultimately changing perceptions. Public relations efforts, at times, seek to affect public opinion through changing perceptions. The strategic use of ideographs, in the form of “key messages” should be recognized for its potential as a valuable, effective means of changing perceptions.

Rhetoric and Public Relations

Influence occurs through rhetoric in the practice of public relations (Elwood 4) More specifically, this influence can be a movement toward social change as a result of a successful community relations campaign. Humans are both persuasive and persuaded social animals, and the everyday reality we take for granted is created, changed, and maintained through rhetoric (Elwood 6). Since public relations campaigns seek to

solidify attitudes, reinforce beliefs or change public opinion, the strategic use of rhetoric becomes crucial to the overall success or failure of a public relations campaign.

Rhetoric constructs reality because it endows reality with meaning. More specifically, attitudes and beliefs are influenced through a process of assigning an attractive meaning to the desired attitude or belief. This is what public relations practitioners do every day when they plan and execute campaigns.

While a few contemporary public relations textbooks recognize the significant role of rhetoric in the public relations planning process, they do not refer to it as such: “Public relations professionals make their living largely by knowing how to use words effectively to communicate desired meaning” (Seitel 129). Seitel uses the term “semantics” as a label for words that are loaded with connotative meanings. Other texts refer to the rhetorical aspect of public relations as the use of symbols: “Considerable amounts of money are then spent on publicizing the symbols and creating meaning for them” (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee 170). Another popular textbook, recognizing that affecting public opinion also implies conscious efforts to exert influence, states: “Effective influence or persuasion inevitably rests on an understanding of those to whom the effort is directed” (Baskin & Aronoff 10). Again, the authors discuss the importance of assigning appropriate meaning to the message in order to get a desired response. In order to do so, the practitioner must use the traditional audience analysis method of knowing what is important and meaningful to the target publics. Noticeably absent is the term “rhetoric” in any of these discussions.

The strategic use of rhetorical devices, such as the ideograph, serves as the backbone of many traditional public relations programs. Yet, the term rhetoric is

virtually non-existent in standard public relations textbooks. This is surprising considering the strategy of using key terms and themes in public relations campaigns is a longstanding principle: “The strategy element of a program plan should state key themes and messages to be reiterated throughout the campaign on all publicity material” (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee 149). It was not until the recent publication of two books -- *Public Relations Inquiry as Rhetorical Criticism*, edited by William N. Elwood, and *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*, edited by Elizabeth L. Toth and Robert L. Heath -- that the intrinsic value of rhetoric to the practice of public relations was first recognized and explored. This area of research needs to continue to develop.

Rhetorical Analysis as Evaluation

This study examined the effectiveness of using new ideographs in the construction of messages in changing the vocabulary people use when referring to Eight Mile Road. The 8MBA’s mission statement articulates its purpose as being the revitalization and promotion of the Eight Mile transportation, business and residential corridor by linking the efforts of the public and private sectors. The 8MBA seeks to join people together to make a difference. The 8MBA views itself, then, as one large community relations endeavor. Every program it executes is designed for the purpose of making a difference at the community level through the combined efforts of residents and business owners. Its challenge is to coordinate and link these efforts. This study examined one such effort.

Specifically, the 8MBA designed and executed a community relations campaign that included the use of positive, carefully chosen ideographs. Through this campaign, the 8MBA attempted to influence the perception of Eight Mile Road by attempting to change the way people “talk” about Eight Mile Road. They first identified negative ideographs

currently being used, and then they replaced them with positive ones. Those ideographs became the “key terms” to be included in all communication throughout the campaign.

This study also examined the value of a rhetorical analysis as a measure of the success of a community relations campaign. The rhetorical criticism level of evaluation in this study served as a sensitive indicator of the success of the 8MBA’s community relations campaign. A rhetorical perspective explains why a campaign’s communication was effective or how it could have been improved (Elwood 4). This is valuable information to any evaluative effort, as it takes the evaluation a step beyond the traditional measures that public relations professionals have been relying on for years. The traditional means of evaluation tells us how much money was raised, for example, but does not tell us why. Do people feel better about the cause? Do contributions reflect an increased level of confidence in the organization’s ability to improve conditions with monies raised? A rhetorical analysis lends insight into the minds of the public to help determine the reasons behind the success of a campaign.

Kenneth Burke’s cluster analysis was an appropriate methodology to choose for exploring the rhetorical aspects of a public relations campaign. This particular methodology allows the critic (arguably, the public relations practitioner in this case) to discover the rhetor’s (the public’s, in this case) worldview. Meanings that key symbols, or terms, have for the rhetor are discovered by charting the symbols that cluster around those key symbols in the rhetorical artifact (in this case, discourse in the form of community feedback sessions and media clippings). A cluster analysis allows the critic to delve more deeply into the mind of the rhetor(s), resulting in insights that may not even

be known to the rhetor. This insight may add a new and valuable dimension to the evaluation of a public relations campaign.

A rhetorical perspective also adds to the depth of pre-campaign research. It allows the practitioner to more intimately know the needs of the audience. This allows the practitioner to better adapt the campaign to the needs of the target audience.

The use of key terms has long served as the backbone of many public relations campaigns. While public relations practitioners recognize the importance of assigning appropriate meanings to messages in order to get a desired response, rarely do they identify that process as being rhetorical in nature. And rarely do professionals take this process one step further by examining other ways in which strategic use of rhetoric can be of value to a campaign, especially one that seeks to impact perception.

Rhetorical critics have suggested that one way public relations practitioners succeed is through effective use of rhetorical strategies. Rhetoric has long been a respected art as well as a privilege and responsibility enjoyed by the most educated of society. This paper examined the use of rhetorical criticism as a measure of the success of a community relations campaign. It links rhetoric and ideology with the practice of public relations by suggesting that a rhetorical perspective adds a new and valuable dimension to the evaluation of a public relations campaign. Since the practice of public relations relies so heavily on strategies born from this rich field, should not public relations benefit from analysis using critical, interpretive rhetorical methods?

Likewise, if, as the most recent research in public relations suggests, practitioners use rhetoric to achieve compliance and goodwill, to manage image and reputation and, in some cases, to change perception, should not some understanding of the history and

nature of rhetoric, rhetorical strategies and rhetorical methodologies be required in all public relations courses at the college level? These principles and methodologies might also be included in licensing courses for professional practitioners. Various methods of critically and rhetorically evaluating public relations campaigns should be further explored at professional association conferences, such as Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) national conventions and International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) conferences, and not just at more academically-oriented conferences such as the National Communication Association (NCA).

More and more, public relations practitioners are viewing themselves as persuaders. They recognize their role as one that influences public opinion. Since public relations practitioners have the power to influence what people think about and how people act toward an organization, a cause or an idea, shouldn't practitioners be trained in the best and most ethical way to do that?

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ABSTRACT

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF IDEOGRAPHS IN A COMMUNITY RELATIONS CAMPAIGN: THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT MILE ROAD

by

MICHELE ANNE NAJOR

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Advisor: James S. Measell
Major: Communication
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Eight Mile Road is a twenty-seven mile stretch of road in southeast Michigan that joins 4.6 million people. To metropolitan Detroiters, however, Eight Mile Road is more than just a roadway or street: it is a racially symbolic marker. Eight Mile Road symbolizes more than two decades of hostility between Detroit and the northern suburbs. Some would even argue that Eight Mile Road separates two worlds: the white from the black, the safe from the unsafe, and the desirable from the undesirable. How did a roadway come to define so much?

This study poses the following research questions: (1) How effective is the use of ideographs in a community relations campaign in redefining a symbolic marker such as Eight Mile Road? (2) Can a rhetorical evaluation be a sensitive indicator of the success of a community relations campaign?

This study examines community relations at two levels. First, a vocabulary of concepts derived from Michael McGee's discussion of the "ideograph" and the link between rhetoric and ideology is explored. This discussion also draws from concepts

developed by Celeste Condit in her examination of the rhetorical constructions of public morality and from C. Jack Orr's framework of the social construction of reality through communication.

Carefully chosen ideographs are used throughout the community relations campaign to convey certain meaning and to predict a particular range of responses. Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis allows the author to rhetorically evaluate the use of ideographs. This study also applies traditional public relations analysis and evaluation techniques to the community relations campaign to measure its effectiveness.

The author concludes that rhetorical criticism adds a new and valuable dimension to the evaluation of a public relations campaign. A rhetorical perspective takes evaluation beyond the traditional objective measures that professionals have used. A rhetorical perspective allows one to see why a campaign's communication was effective and how it might be improved. Since the strategic use of rhetorical devices serves as the backbone of many traditional public relations programs, the author argues that a rhetorical perspective adds a new and valuable dimension to the evaluation of a public relations campaign.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Michele Anne Najor was born in Detroit, Michigan. While an undergraduate student at Wayne State University, she competed on the forensics team. She graduated with a B.A. in public relations. Upon graduation, she was employed at Bassett & Bassett, a Detroit-based public relations agency.

As a graduate student, she was a teaching assistant, a research assistant, and a coach for the university's Individual Events team. She earned an M.A. in communication with a specialization in organizational communication and public relations from Wayne State University. Her master's thesis was entitled "An Analysis of Codes of Ethics in the Communication Professions."

Ms. Najor has presented several conference papers and participated on several panel discussions addressing the area of public relations and public relations education. She participated in the National Communication Association's Summer Conference on Public Relations Education; co-presented "Building Unity: From Theory to Practice" at a Central States Communication Association Convention and presented "An Analysis of Codes of Ethics in the Communication Professions," designated as one of the "top four" public relations papers, at a Central States Communication Association Convention.

In 1997, she was appointed as a Lecturer in the Department of Communication at Wayne State University. She serves as Faculty Advisor for the Wayne State University Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America. She is a member of the Public Relations Society of America, National Communication Association, Central States Communication Association and Michigan Association of Speech Communication.