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Community engagement: Exploring a relational approach to consultation and collaborative practice in Australia

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Abstract

Community engagement is increasingly being employed by Australian organizations as a key strategy to incorporate representative community opinions into decision-making. This trend is reflected by Australian local and state governments legislating for community consultation in major infrastructure projects and the increasing role of public relations practitioners to manage these programs. This study explores community engagement founded on relational theory and proposed a typology of engagement employing a relational framework. .An exploratory study of 20 Australian infrastructure projects with a mandatory consultation component are analysed applying this framework. Results indicate little discrimination between the terms engagement, consultation, and participation, however a range of tactics supported both collaborative and advocacy approaches. The implications for adopting a relational framework for community engagement programs are discussed.

Introduction

The trend to a more socially-inclusive and responsive form of organizational decision-making is founded on a belief that engaging a community for specific programs can lead to better organizational and social outcomes (Adams & Hess, 2001; Bruning, McGrew, & Cooper, 2006; Everett, 2001; Grunig, 2000). This trend is also reflected in an increasing role for public relations practitioners in developing, managing and reporting on community engagement activities. While community engagement is viewed as an extension of the boundary spanning role interfacing between an organization and its community (Xavier, 2008), little guidance is offered by the literature to inform this practice. This study responds to this challenge through firstly reviewing the theoretical foundations of community engagement practice and proposing a relational framework. The relational framework is then applied to analyse community consultation or engagement practices from 20 Australian infrastructure

cases with a mandated consultation component. Finally, the implications for public relations and engagement practice are then presented.

The engagement philosophy

Organizations promoting an engagement philosophy share a symmetrical worldview that is community oriented and recognises the interdependence of an organization with its community (Grunig & White, 1992). This relationship acknowledges community interest in key organizational issues, decisions and actions as desirable, and the predisposition of community members to be involved or ignore the relationship.

To engage an individual member of a community relies on individual interest, trust, knowledge, and importantly a feeling of community belonging and support (Barkan, 1998). The foundations of community engagement therefore need to be based on appeals of relevance, context, emotion, and problem recognition (Littlejohn, 1999), achieved through strategies that develop community knowledge, skills, values and motivation (O'Connor, 2006). Underpinning an engagement philosophy are communication strategies to inform and raise awareness, seek involvement, opinions and provide feedback, and create real partnerships through shared community problem solving. A typology of community engagement - community information, community consultation and community participation - serves to explore the role of these strategies in engaging communities and explicates processes as rules or guides for public relations activities and definitional clarity for engagement concepts (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

Community engagement – A typology

This paper adopts Harvey's (1969, cited in Hunt, 2002) approach to logically partition engagement practices into a typology of community engagement offering a classificational schemata as a primary tool to organise phenomena to advance theory development (Hunt, 2002). The typology reflects classes of engagement philosophies, strategies and tactics "that are homogeneous with respect to some categorical properties (Hunt, 2002, p. 223).

Community information

Successful community engagement is founded on effective, appropriate, and timely information provided to community members. Defined as the one-way dissemination of concepts (information) relating to a topic or problem to a pre-defined community group. As an engagement strategy, community information provides facts, context, relevance, or position relating to an organizational decision. Community information corresponds to the public information model of public relations to disseminate information about the organization and the project (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), and an asymmetrical worldview (Grunig & White, 1992) where the design of the communication interaction is limiting. Tactics typically found in community information strategies include using advertising, shopping centre or public displays, or direct mail brochures to communicate information.

Community consultation

Community consultation is defined as the process used to solicit opinions and views by individuals and interested community members relating to a specific organization-

defined issue. Community consultation also recognises that although community members groups may exert influence, the organization retains the right to make the decision (Bishop & Davis, 2002; Brackertz, Zwart, Meredyth, & Ralston, 2005; Thomas, 1990). The purpose of community consultation therefore is to capture a diverse range of opinions from interested community members, rather than capturing the views of every community member (Spicker, 2006). Consultation requires no promise of influence; after consulting, "the manager makes a decision which may or may not reflect the influence of the group" (Vroom & Yetton cited in Thomas, 1990, p. 437) . This distinction is important yet it is not uncommon to find the terms engagement, consultation, and participation, used interchangeably with an implication that the community has been consulted *and* participated in a decision-making process.

Community participation

Community participation suggests an active role by community members in the creation of meaning and developing solutions to complex social problems or proposed solutions that affect a specific community (Janse & Konijnendijk, 2007).
The OECD (2001) considers participation as an active partnership where citizens engage in defining processes and content with a recognition of capacity and the acknowledgement of equality for citizens; highlighting that final responsibility for decisions rests with government. Tang and Waters (2005) also describe community participation as actions to encourage community members through relevant channels and tactics to be involved in planning tasks. Specifically this includes identifying issues, concerns and information relating to the problem, then developing and evaluating solutions. The active involvement by community members to jointly

Community engagement: Exploring community consultation

develop meanings and negotiate solutions to an issue through dialogic processes in interaction with organizational members differentiates community participation from consultation.

A number of scholars have addressed the essential ingredients of participation programs. Bishop and Davis (2002) argue participation involves an expectation by community members that they have a voice in the power sharing process. Communication between an organization and its publics is necessary to achieve a dialogue to empower communities and increase trust between all parties (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Janse & Konijnendijk, 2007). Janse and Konijnendijk (2007) suggest community participation describes a two-way communication of knowledge and feedback before decision making occurs. Participation as the highest order indicates true collaboration and power sharing subscribed by Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation.

The facilitation of participation is equally important as community expectation. Participation relies on all parties to not only have an ability to communicate their definition of meaning but also to collaborate (Hung, 2005, p. 208) or participate constructively (Heylings & Bravo, 2007). Building community capacity to participate is highlighted by Xavier (2008) stating "meaningful participation strategies require organizations to address barriers to participation, building the capacity of stakeholders – particularly disenfranchised ones – to get involved" (p. 102).

Pseudo engagement – consultation or participation practices

Arnstein (1969) first identified the concept of tokenism in her ladder of participation

that characterised eight levels or rungs of participation corresponding to the extent of power a citizen had over the end decision. Arnstein recognised tokenistic attempts to portray involvement or sharing decision-making by organizations. Evidence of pseudo engagement continues to be evident in contemporary practice. Pseudo engagement is where an organization portrays a depth of community participation or consultation, however in practice, these are propaganda attempts to influence 'a perception of' engagement or consultation (Durey & Lockhart, 2004). While the efforts subscribed by organizations are to portray processes of consultation or participation, the objectives of the program are output or appearance based. How industry responds to these classifications leads to the first research question: RQ1: *How are the terms information, engagement, consultation, and participation used contemporary Australian consultation projects?*

Relational framework

A relational perspective to community engagement offers a departure from the current focus on power sharing in the community consultation and participation literature (Arnstein, 1969; Boxelaar, Paine, & Beilin, 2006; Ray, Dozier, Broom, & Hofstetter, 2006; Shand & Arnberg, 1996) and presents a theory-based relational framework for exploring these phenomena (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Taylor, Vasquez, & Doorley, 2003). As relationship management is central to accommodating diversity in perspective (Spicer, 1997), this study furthers the application of a relationship model (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Ledingham, 2001) considered appropriate for the current social engagement agenda (Gregory, 2003).

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A relational perspective is founded on communication (Broom et al., 2000) as a process "to create or negotiate shared understandings" (Ledingham, 2001, p. 205) with community members. Derived from systems theory, a relational perspective suggests the outcomes of a organizational-public relationship are based on patterns of interaction and mutual adaptation over time (Broom et al., 2000). Ongoing communication between an organization and community members "helps to develop the stable, long-term relationships that an organization needs to build support from stakeholders and to manage conflict when it occurs" (Grunig & Repper, 1992). The relationship is defined by the antecedents, relational concepts, and consequences of that exchange (Broom et al., 2000). The following model applies these concepts within a relational framework to further explore and extend community engagement theory (see figure 1). The model is then explicated in the following discussion to provide definitional clarity.

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┌──────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              │◄──────►│ Purpose and goals and objectives of program│
│ Antecedents  │        │              (world view)                  │
│              │        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
│              │◄──────►│ Resources and skills                       │
│ Principles/  │        │ Organizational and practitioner            │
│ Legitimacy of│◄──────►│ Social/opinion/ political Environment       │
│ Consultation │◄──────►│ Publics          Latent                    │
│              │        │                  Aware                     │
│              │        │                  Active                    │
└──────────────┘
```

Purpose and goals and objectives of program
(world view)

Resources and skills
Organizational and practitioner

Social/opinion/ political Environment

Publics — Latent / Aware / Active

Engagement Relationship strategies (world views)

Dialogue/ Collaboration/ Power sharing

Monologue/ Advocacy/ Power holding

Participation

Consultation

Information

Pseudo engagement

Typology of Engagement

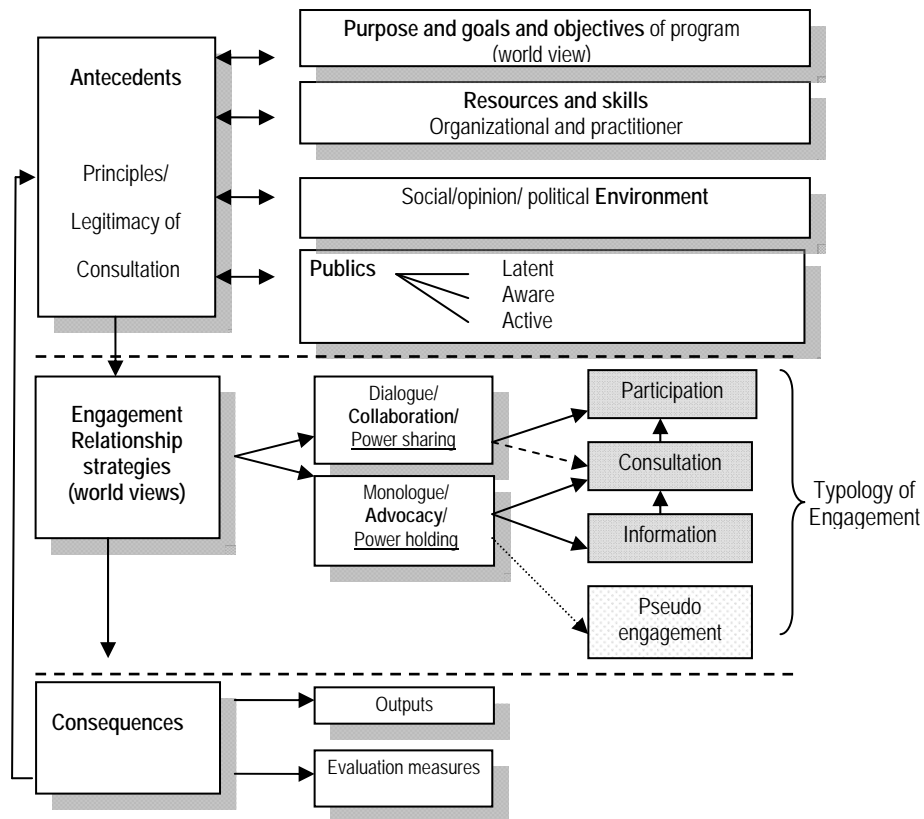Consequences

Outputs

Evaluation measures

Figure 1: A relational model of community engagement (adapted from Broom, Casey & Ritchie, 2000)

Antecedents

Community engagement antecedents or causes of the relationship (Broom et al., 2000) would include the engagement goals, the organizational worldview, organizational resources, the social environment, and publics. The purpose of the engagement program reflects the world view of the organization that either welcomes new ideas and flexible thinking or resists change and maintains organizational traditions (Grunig & White, 1992). Goals reflect the need to meet mandated or voluntary requirements associated with intended impacts of a community engagement program such as to influence attitudes or behaviours of a community group. The organizational worldview towards engagement translates to organizational resources

allocated to the recruitment of skilled practitioners and to fund subsequent research, development, implementation and evaluation of the programs. Research also recognises the influence of the opinion, regulatory and political environment on program design provides context to the engagement program.

Community publics

The concept of 'community' is central to community engagement (Adams & Hess, 2001) yet the concept remains vague in the literature (Crase, Dollery, & Wallis, 2005; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). The difficulty in defining 'community' may be a reflection of the challenge in responding to the diversity and complexity of communities that surround a community engagement project (Crase et al., 2005; Janse & Konijnendijk, 2007).

Community is commonly characterised as either stakeholders or publics (general or community). While recognising the importance of a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by organizational purpose" (Freeman, 1984, p.52), categorising community members into publics based on communication behaviours (Grunig & Repper, 1992) refines the complexity of an homogenous community or stakeholder groups based on how key groups that exist in a community relate to the issue in terms of involvement, context, and impact (Cutlip et al., 2006). Publics imply an active social group working towards finding solutions (Dewey, 1927, cited in Cutlip et al., 2006, p. 209). Grunig and Hunt's (1984) situational theory of publics indicates the type of relationship based on how the social unit identifies the problem. Latent publics are unaware of the problem, aware publics recognise they are affected or involved, and active publics communicate about the problem and take

action (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), commonly a desired outcome for consultation and participation strategies.

To adequately engage community groups to collaborate in project decision making requires adequate research to not only identify the key publics, current social opinions and drivers of opinion, but also appropriate communication tactics to reach these groups (Schwartz & Deruyttere, 1996). A key point noted by Adams and Hess (2001) is the importance of understanding community identities and values, yet community is often defined in community engagement projects geographically. This leads to the second research question, RQ2: *How is the concept of 'community' described in consultation design?*

Relationship strategies

Organization-public relationships are created when there is an interdependence between an organization and its publics, either voluntary or mandated, that creates consequences for both parties (Hung, 2005). Communication is a key influence on organizational behaviours (Persson, 2006) and communication frames determine the way an organization communicates with a community (Spicer, 1997).

Communication frames construct social reality (Scheufele, 1999) through selection and salience (Entman, 1993). Entman (1993) argues framing selects "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). Frames assist members to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies

(Entman, 1993, p. 52). Spicer (1997) argues the adopted communication frame, specifically an advocacy or collaborative frame, influences the way communication is defined and used in organization-community interactions.

Advocacy and collaboration communication frames can be used to differentiate community engagement strategies of information, consultation, and participation. Advocacy is a one way communication frame encased in monologue, while collaborative approaches are more aligned with symmetrical models of public relations and seek to affirm relationships through dialogic frames (Spicer, 1997). Spicer's advocacy approach to communication is often used in consultation projects viewed as tokenistic (Arnstein, 1969) or legitimizing rather than integrating community views (Persson, 2006). Yet Heath (2007) acknowledges advocacy's rhetorical heritage and suggests advocacy is both the content and process of discourse in response to a rhetorical problem; a dialogue of ideas. In a community engagement context, advocacy frames are used in community information strategies and share a role with dialogue in consultation programs.

Collaborative approaches are more aligned with a symmetrical worldview and seek to affirm relationships through dialogic frames (Spicer, 1997). Spicer (1997) suggests collaborative approaches can only be successful when the contextual knowledge (values, beliefs, and opinions) held by and influencing publics is recognised. This recognition comes from an investment by all parties, through action, to seek a mutually acceptable solution (Toth, 2000). Collaboration can be viewed as achieving a shared vision, maintaining or enhancing a position or as a strategy to respond to a new environment or situation (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). In community engagement, collaborative frames are used in community participation

strategies, and have a shared role with dialogue in consultation programs. RQ3: *Do communication tactics used in Australian consultation projects seek to promote advocacy or collaborative approaches?*

Consequences

The consequences of a relationship are the changing goal states resulting from the relationship strategies (Broom et al., 2000). In community engagement, these may be the achievement of the organizational goals or purpose, or may have some impact on the social or political environment such as an increase in activist activities, a shift in public opinion about the project or increasing media attention. Any of these outcomes will inturn influence the relationship antecedents and the tactics used to communicate with community stakeholders or publics. Arnstein's (1969) identification of tokenistic participation sets up the need to evaluate both the engagement process and the outcomes of the communication program. The focus of evaluation in public relations practice is to demonstrate impact on publics and achievement of program goals (Walker, 1994; Xavier, Johnston, Patel, Watson, & Simmons, 2005). Evaluation is a necessary inclusion to make a case for the mandated performance of the engagement program and budget requirements. RQ4: *How are Australian consultation projects evaluated?*

Methodology

This exploratory study employs a historical and comparative perspective (Babbie, 2001) to analyse community consultation and participation cases against academic frameworks. A coding instrument was drawn from the literature (see Figure 1) founded on relational frameworks of antecedents, processes and consequences

(Grunig & Repper, 1992).

Data sample and analysis and coding

Community engagement and more specifically, community consultation, has been legislated into major infrastructure development in Australia. State and regulatory frameworks mandate an investigation of social impact categories through an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In most Australian states, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) oversees the policy for EIAs. The EPA describes the EIA as "the process of identifying, evaluating and mitigating the biophysical, social, and other relevant effects of development proposals prior to major decisions being taken and commitments made" (Gwinner, Gremler, & Bitner, 1998). Community engagement is noted as an essential part of this process and prescriptive "how to" guides exist to guide practice.

The sample for this study is taken from major infrastructure projects undertaken in Australia from 2001 to 2006 with an EIS or EIA that have a mandatory community consultation component, and have published reports on the Internet. The cases and data sources are summarised in table 1.

Case	Data Source
1. Tugun Bypass	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
2. Clermont Coal Mine	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
3. Black Springs Wind Farm	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
4. Alcan Gove Alumina	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
5. Dyno Moranbah Ammonium Nitrate Project	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
6. Tennyson Tennis Centre	Project Terms of Reference (TOR)
	Community consultation/ engagement plan
7. Caltex Clean Fuels	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
8. Menindee Lakes	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
9. Abbot Point Coal Terminal	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
10 Coffs Harbour Sewerage	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
11 Moorland to Herons Creek	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
12 Southern Regional Water Alliance	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
13 BHP Stybarrow	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
14 North South Bypass Tunnel	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
15 Brisbane Airport parallel runway	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
16 Burnett-River Dam (Paradise Dam)	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
17 Camden Gas Project Joint Venture	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
18 Woodlawn Wind Farm	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
19 QLD Coke and Energy Stanwell	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
20 Woodside Otway Gas Project	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Table 1 – Sample - data sources

The specific unit of analysis was the community consultation chapter, section, or plan detailing the project goals, objectives, tactics and evaluation mechanisms and provide communication approaches guiding the processes of information, engagement, consultation and participation by affected communities. Mapping against the relational framework and category criteria are presented in table 2. The categories were generated from the literature and from normative practice evidenced in engagement documents.

Relational	Category criteria
Antecedent	Terminology- label e.g. ; consultation, engagement, participation
	Terminology – community e.g. ; community, stakeholders, publics
	Community (identifiers) e.g. ; research, prioritised, data base, demographic, opinion leaders
	Goals e.g. ; Inform/ engage/ consult/ participate
	Resources Methodology/ skills e.g. ; Analysis, Feedback
	Objectives e.g. ; Output/ impact
Strategies	Tactics – process e.g. ; Advocacy/ monologue
	Tactics - actual
Consequences	Outputs and outcomes e.g. ; Goal achievement, longer term relationship
	Evaluation e.g. self appraisal/ scientific

Table 2 – Categories and criteria

To respond to the research questions, a coding instrument was developed after a review of extant literature on community- engagement, information, consultation and participation. The instrument captured a number of descriptive categories relating to the normative use of terms, description of publics, stakeholders and community, communication framing, associated tactics used to engage with community members and evaluation indicators.

Data were coded by the researcher against the categories and units listed in table 2. The research instrument was piloted on one case prior to data collection then one conceptual category was further refined. Following refinement, the instrument was further tested on two cases. This resulted in a reliability score of .9 for the instrument. During the coding process, reliability was checked and sustained at this level. Data from the 20 cases were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency counts and descriptive statistics were calculated for the relevant variables. The coding sheet is available from the author.

Limitations

There are several limitations for this study. The small sample indicates the results are not generalisable beyond the population of the Australian cases explored. The data sources are a secondary source reporting on consultation activity and the author recognises these official reports may not accurately reflect full dialogue of consultative approaches undertaken and may be rhetorical in nature. In addition, the mandated consultation guidelines may predetermine the descriptive use of terminology or scope of community engagement activities. This was addressed by analysing the narrative text within the documents being alert for other terminology.

The descriptive nature of the method supports an exploratory study and limits the knowledge gained from this approach.

Results

RQ1: How is the concept of 'community' described in consultation design?

Across the cases, a combination of the term 'community and stakeholders' dominated with more than 70% using this term, with 20% exclusively using the term stakeholder. This differentiation between community and stakeholder differentiates an affected public and an interested public, identifying some groups are impacted by an infrastructure project more than others. Only 5% applied the terms 'community' or 'general public'. However there was no further differentiation of active, aware or latent publics by any case.

Publics were identified by a range of mechanisms across the cases including using published interest groups and relevant government departments (5%). A combination of these methods and secondary research was found in 65% of cases. Geographical and demographic identification of publics was found in 10% of cases that may reflect the role that government and regulators play in the approval of infrastructure and redevelopment projects. Predetermined databases and research as the prime source of public identification was used in 5% of cases.

RQ2: How are the terms information, engagement, consultation, and participation used contemporary Australian consultation projects?

The term consultation dominated the cases reflecting the guidelines and terminology imposed by the EIS process. However 30% of cases referred to some form of

engagement with community members. In these cases, there was no evidence found to distinguish the use of the term engagement and consultation suggesting that the term was indiscriminate rather than purposeful. A presentation of these results is in table 3.

Terminology	Use %
Consultation	70
Engagement	10
Consultation and Engagement	20

Table 3: Terminology

RQ3: Do communication tactics used in Australian consultation projects seek to promote advocacy or collaborative approaches?

A range of monologue and dialogue promoting tactics were used across all cases. More than half of all cases (55%) used up to five monologue tactics, with 45% of cases using up to nine monologue tactics. The type and frequency of tactics used by each case is presented in table 4.

Tactic – Advocacy - Monologue	% use
Newsletter	95
Advertising	90
Media Releases	75
Fact Sheet	65
Information kits	40
Direct Mail/ Letters	40

Contact Cards	5

Table 4: Frequency and type of monologue tactics used

Dialogic or symmetrical communication tactics were used in all cases, with 70% of cases using up to five dialogic tactics to communicate with community groups. Phone hotlines and meetings with key groups and individuals were the most popular tactics, while broader scientific methods to discover community opinions, such as surveys and focus groups were used least. The phone hotline, public displays and open days were classified as dialogic based on assumptions that they were answered or manned by staff that possessed the knowledge and skills to undertake dialogue with community members in a meaningful way and capture community responses for analysis and decision making. In some cases, this was not explicit. The summary of dialogic tactics used by each case is presented in table 5

Tactic – Collaborative- Dialogue	% use
Phone Hotline	90
Meetings – key groups	85
Meetings - individuals	80
Presentations	80
Briefings	75
Public Displays/ Open Days	70
Meetings – General public	45
Workshops	35
Survey	35
Focus Groups	5

Table 5: Frequency and type of dialogue tactics used

RQ4: How are Australian consultation project evaluated

Evaluation of the specific consultation program was not evidenced in any cases. Instead the success of the program was integrated into reporting of measures of output or implementation effectiveness (Cutlip et al., 2006). Output or implementation effectiveness documents the adequacy of tactics and effort of the communication practitioner and is often demonstrated by counts of attendances, stories placed in media, counts of meetings held and gross impressions (Cutlip et al., 2006). Outputs counted included the number of meetings held, newspaper editorials achieved, people briefed and feedback forms received. Impact effectiveness measures respond to the specific project objects and if the overall program goal was achieved. Only 15% of cases reported evaluation of impact effectiveness (Cutlip et al., 2006) of the project (integrating broad communication processes) based on survey or feedback criteria. Forty percent of cases reported no mechanism to gauge effectiveness of the consultation process. A summary is presented in table 6.

Evidence of evaluation	% use
Evaluation – scientific approach	15
Self claimed	35
Assumed	10
None stated	40

Table 6: Evaluation of engagement/consultation program

Discussion and implications

Given the increasing role of public relations practitioners in developing, managing and reporting on community engagement activities, little guidance is offered by the

literature to inform practice. The aim of this paper was to explore current engagement practices using a typology of engagement and propose a relational framework and to manage this complex task and respond to this need.

Community consultation has certainly evolved beyond providing information about intentions to the relevant community as a response to greater demands for corporate social responsibility and community demands for real involvement in decision making (Barbaro, 2006).   While the technical complexity of some projects requiring community input can limit the opportunity for community members to be involved due to a lack of professional and technical knowledge, the challenge remains for communicators to create and facilitate opportunities for meaningful community input.

Differentiation between meanings of the terms engagement, consultation and participation remains one of the key challenges for organizations seeking to involve community opinions in decision-making and communities seeking to be involved. Terminology is used interchangeably both in practice and in the literature (Crase et al., 2005) and implications of indistinct terms requires projects to clearly articulate the engagement goals, allocate resources, and identify and differentiate between stakeholders and publics. The articulation of goals will also determine genuine collaboration and advocacy approaches (Spicer, 1997) to facilitating the engagement relationship and ultimately contribute to Arnstein's (1969) model of citizen participation founded on power sharing. Grunig and Huang (2000) argue power imbalance is a natural phenomenon in organization-public relationships, as organizations and publics struggle to promote self-interests in current or future scenarios (Persson, 2006). Further research is needed to understand the interplay

between power sharing and Spicer's (1997) collaborative advocacy approaches.

The range of tactics used in the cases indicated a balance of advocacy and collaborative approaches. While a common claim in practice is information equals consultation, Bracketz et al (2005) cautions that in the context of community engagement, the provision of information alone does not constitute community consultation or participation. The lack of relationship between terminology used, such as employing the term engagement, and an increase in dialogic tactics was not found suggesting the use of the terms may have been indiscriminate or reflective of popular culture.

The evidence that organizations are differentiating between community and stakeholder reflects recognition of the difference between an affected public and an interested public and discriminates between groups impacted more than others by an infrastructure project. However further differentiation between a latent, active and aware public would provide opportunities for organizations to support or empower latent and aware publics to be more involved and be more responsive to their communication needs. The diversity of community opinions and complexity of managing both advocacy and collaborative approaches remains a constant, particularly in major infrastructure projects that potentially benefit some, more than others, in a community.

The lack of or generally poor reporting of evaluation of community engagement processes and outcomes is surprising given the regulation of the consultation requirement for planning approval, although it is consistent with other research on evaluation of public relations impact by practitioners in Australia (Walker, 1997; Xavier et al., 2005). This may be due to the focus on process outputs

or satisfying the requirements stipulated by the EIS, and not considerate of the value of the relationship, both short and long term, for the organization undertaking the redevelopment. From a relational perspective, evaluation needs to account for relationship dimensions (Grunig & Huang, 2000) and the communication process undertaken by practitioners to advance community engagement articulated through clear impact and output objectives.

In conclusion, this study points to a clear need for greater differentiation of engagement strategies that will assist to clarify communication goals and align engagement tactics. The differentiation will assist organizations and governments in evaluating engagement programs and enable practitioners to manage community expectations of a program.

Taking a relational perspective founded on communication responds to the process components for consultation required by government while accommodating the complexity and diversity of community publics. A relational framework offers a planning structure for practitioners managing engagement programs and responds to Grunig's (2000) call for public relations to embrace collaborative values to guide research, practice and contribute to moving "democratic societies away from confrontation and divisiveness to more collaborative cultures" (p. 45).

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