

**Exploring the roles of Australian communication practitioners  
in organizational value setting: Agents of conscience,  
control, and/or compliance?**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **DECLARATION**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Marianne Dayrit Sison

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*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*  
*John F Kennedy*

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

The following list presents the meanings of the acronyms used in this thesis. While the words were spelt out before the acronyms were consequently used, this list provides an easy reference for the reader.

ANZ	Australia and New Zealand
BCA	Business Council of Australia
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EGM	Executive General Manager
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
GM	General Manager
HR	Human Resources
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
MD	Managing Director
PR	Public Relations
PRIA	Public Relations Institute of Australia
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined whether Australian public relations and communication practitioners enact an organizational conscience role through their involvement in the organizational value-setting process. Thirty communication practitioners from 26 large organizations in Melbourne and Sydney were interviewed between May 2004 and May 2005 to ascertain and discuss their involvement in organizational value setting. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather data and then applying a multiple perspective approach in its thematic data analysis, the research found that most respondents were involved in organizational value setting albeit at different stages of the process. In analysing the nature of the respondent's involvement in the process along with individual and organizational factors, three roles emerged namely, the agent of critical conscience, the agent of concertive control, and the agent of corporate compliance. However the results suggest that most respondents enacted primarily the concertive control and corporate compliance agency roles. The study also found that the predominant managerial/functionalist perspective constrains practitioners from enacting the conscience leadership role.

In exploring the practitioners' ability to influence organizational members, findings support recent studies that membership in the dominant coalition does not necessarily give public relations/communication practitioners power and influence. Rather, direct access to the CEO, expertise, performance and personality were found to be the key ingredients to the individual communication practitioners' organizational influence. Findings also reveal that public relations/communication practitioners preferred to participate but not drive the organizational value-setting process.

In using a multiple perspective approach to study public relations roles, this study provides empirical basis for identifying potential leadership roles for public relations/communication practitioners and for suggesting an extension of the manager-technician role typology. The study calls for public relations/communication practitioners to enact a critical conscience agent role as part of finding a meaningful, ethical and socially responsible practice. This study proposes that critical thought and dialectical inquiry be embedded within the public relations/communication practitioner's role and public relations education.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*"We must become the change we want to see in this world."  
- Mohandas Gandhi*

*"All business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval. If that be true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what it is doing, and what it hopes to do. This seems practically a duty."  
- Arthur W Page*

*"...there is one and only one social responsibility of business-to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud."  
- Milton Friedman*

### **1.1 Background: Changing roles in a pluralistic and complex world**

Organizations now operate in an increasingly complex, pluralistic and turbulent world threatened by natural disasters, terrorism, corporate scandals and rapidly changing new technologies. With globalization, countries hooked on to the wave of a worldwide market-based capitalism that has produced both avid supporters and passionate detractors. At the same time, major financial scandals in the US and Australia have urged businesses to be more transparent and accountable amid an increasingly legal and regulatory environment. These incidents combined triggered a resurgence of interest in organizational values and ethics.

As a response, organizations adopted values-based management and public relations practitioners have been tasked to disseminate the corporate ideology among their external and internal stakeholders. Corollary to this response, public relations scholars continually suggest that public relations practitioners can and should be the organizational conscience. However, no one has ventured to examine if and how practitioners actually enact organizational conscience roles. In particular, scholars have not investigated if and how public relations practitioners are involved in the construction of organizational values.

In Australia, public relations and communication practitioners work in this turbulent corporate milieu and unfortunately have been embroiled in this turmoil. The collapse of HIH Insurance and One.tel as well as the cash-for-comment incidents involving radio hosts John Laws and Alan Jones in 1999 and 2004 entangled the Australian public relations industry in ethical dilemmas. The ever-changing

corporate environment continues to challenge Australian communication practitioners seeking to gain professional status as information becomes a prime commodity in the global marketplace. As organizations continually adapt their internal structures, processes and relationships to economic and technological demands, so must their communication processes (Jones et al., 2004). And for an industry like public relations that has been battling for decades to legitimise itself with its struggles for identity, definition, professionalism and acceptance, these complexities cause further tensions.

Yet despite this changing terrain, public relations roles research has not progressed much beyond the manager-technician dichotomy developed by Broom and Dozier more than 20 years ago. In particular, while many scholars have written about the role of the public relations practitioner as organizational conscience, none have examined whether practitioners actually enact the conscience role through their involvement in the value-setting process.

In fact, public relations roles research has not integrated potential changes in practitioner roles. Over the last 25 years, public relations roles research has focussed primarily on validating the manager-technician typology, rather than extending the typology. Very little recent research has attempted to do so and this paucity may be constrained by the dominant managerial/functionalist perspective in public relations scholarship. Only recently has it been acknowledged that scholarship has moved to include a co-creational perspective (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

Much of public relations scholarship, with its predominant singular managerial/functionalist perspective, has devoted its focus on gaining the elusive seat in the dominant coalition as a prerequisite to engendering organizational change. While this argument is reasonable from one perspective, it does not acknowledge the power that the larger number of individuals outside the dominant coalition can exert.

Despite the amount of public relations ethics research, issues of dominant coalition membership and measurement of public relations value still dominate the minds of practitioners, educators and students (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 6; White, 1997, p. 169).

So how can practitioners become the organizational conscience if they are so concerned about being a member of the dominant coalition or trying to justify the value of the communication function? How can practitioners become the organizational conscience if their current function is restricted to the dissemination of information regarding the corporate values? American practitioner Elizabeth Howard,

a principal at the New York-based consultancy Dilenschneider Group, admitted that despite public relations practitioners being “charged with communicating company values to stakeholder groups, they have had little to do with the construction of these values” (*PR News*, 2001, p. 1).

Could this restriction to the ‘communication’ rather than the ‘construction’ of values be related to the individual practitioner’s perspective? Or are there other factors that influence the practitioner’s role? How do education and the workplace inform this perspective?

Seemingly, the definitions and foci of public relations scholarship may have contributed to this negative perception of the practice. While there is a great acceptance of the management function definition popularised by Grunig and Hunt (1984) by industry practitioners and academics around the world, it has not been without criticism (Leitch & Neilson, 1997; Weaver, 2001; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002). The criticisms range from the definition’s instrumentalist approach to the absence of the power dimensions particularly in the ‘ideal’ two-way symmetric public relations model. Interestingly recent contributions (Berger, 2005; Roper, 2005) to scholarship address these questions about power and the notion of the dominant coalition popularised by Grunig and his colleagues for the Excellence Study<sup>1</sup> (see for example, J Grunig, 1992; Dozier, et al., 1995; L Grunig, et al., 2002).

One of the challenges educators like myself face is how to reduce the inconsistencies between academia and the practice. How can we guide and prepare future practitioners for careers that are socially relevant? How can we keep optimistic about an industry that seems to be saddled with self-doubt and wrong-footing? Finding out the answers to these questions underpin this current research. Is there an ethical and socially responsible role for public relations/communication practitioners to enact within the 21<sup>st</sup> century organization? Is the organizational conscience role a real possibility or merely a pipe dream for public relations practitioners?

This research explores this question by going into the heart of what informs conscience and ethical practice—values. Individual human values inform one’s conscience and guide one’s behaviour. Values emerge from a moral framework which is cultivated through one’s upbringing and socialization (Treviño & Weaver, 2003). Organizational values have been referred to as the “DNA” of an

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<sup>1</sup> The Excellence Study, to be referred hereon in as the Excellence Study, was a two-phase study undertaken between 1990-1994 by James Grunig, David Dozier and Larissa Grunig under the auspices of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation. The US\$400,000 grant allowed them to interview CEOs and senior public relations and communication practitioners in the US, Canada and the United Kingdom and resulted in several publications including three books by the three lead researchers.

organization's culture (Henderson & Thompson, 2003). If values define organizational behaviour, how then are values created? Who are the people involved in the creation and development of these organizational values? Management scholars have specified that value setting is an integral component of the strategic planning process (Mintzberg, 1994; Graetz et al., 2002) in which managers are involved. Public relations and communication managers have often been expected and have often claimed involvement in the strategic planning process. Does this mean then that public relations/communication practitioners are or could be involved in the setting of organizational values? Do they have the power to influence organizational behavior by their involvement in the value-setting process?

Contrary to practitioner perceptions about their absence in the powerful decision-making dominant coalition, other scholars and writers have charged practitioners as enjoying powerful and privileged roles within the organization. Communication practitioners, by virtue of their expertise and access to information, have been touted to be extremely powerful 'manipulators' and 'spin doctors' (Stauber & Rampton, 1995; Ewen, 1996) as well as in active participants creating organizations (Cheney & Dionisopoulos, 1989). These differences in perceptions of power is critical in evaluating public relations as organizational conscience, particularly in exposing the level of influence the practitioner has in engendering 'good', ethical and socially responsible behaviour within the organization.

What roles do communication practitioners enact in this process? What organizational and individual factors influence the roles enacted by the practitioner? Is the way public relations/communication defined in the organization affect the influence of the practitioner in the organizational value-setting process?

## **1.2 Aim of understanding public relations roles**

As such, to ascertain whether public relations and communication practitioners enact the organizational conscience role, this study examines what roles practitioners enact in organizational value setting. By using a multiple perspectives approach, the study investigates practitioner roles through their structural relationships, their discourse and meaning making, and the power relationships within the organization. To gain insights into their current roles and their role expectations, public relations and communication practitioners were interviewed.

Organizational value setting is not part of the usual cache of roles and responsibilities associated with public relations practitioners and managers unlike issues management (L Grunig, et al., 2002; DeSanto & Moss, 2004). And yet strategic planning, which includes the value-setting process through the

development of vision, mission, values and codes of conduct, is positioned as integral to public relations education (see for example Smith, 2005; Johnston & Zawawi, 2004) despite a couple of studies showing that many practitioners are not really involved in strategic planning (see L Grunig, et al., 2002). To address these concerns, this study first asks communication practitioners about their involvement in the strategic planning process. Then they are asked about their involvement in the value-setting process. Finding out the current state of play in these strategic organizational processes allows a clarification of assumptions about practitioners' strategic roles.

This research also aims to contribute to public relations and communication roles research by understanding the extent to which communication practitioners are involved in setting organizational values, the levels of influence they have, how their unique positions within their organizations can offer them an opportunity to become change agents, and the ways in which they can further contribute not only to their organizations but perhaps, to society. While a substantial amount of research on public relations roles has been undertaken over the last 30 years (Pasadeos et al., 1999), no research has focused on the potential involvement of practitioners in organizational value setting. Furthermore, public relations roles research has not been known for its qualitative methods of inquiry nor have they used the multiple perspectives approach in analysing public relations roles. Moreover, no research has focused on Australian practitioners' perceptions of their in-house roles particularly in the area of organizational values, power, influence and leadership.

While public relations has been traditionally viewed from its external relations activities, many organizations now realise the importance of engaging with their internal audiences (e.g., employees) first before they can effectively communicate with their external stakeholders (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Sison, 2004). From an organizational values point of view, focusing on 'internal public relations' (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006) is integral to the discussion.

Organizational values have been a topic of research in management literature for many years, most notably in the context of values-based management which became popular alongside concepts of corporate culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982), excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982), and visionary companies (Collins & Porras, 1997). If organizational values, along with basic assumptions and artefacts, comprise organizational culture (Schein, 1992), and public relations/communication practitioners co-create organizational culture, then it could be argued that they may have a hand in developing organizational values. Furthermore, if organizational values underpin the organizational culture and guide employee behaviour, is it possible to introduce interventions through the



organizational value-setting process? Could these interventions, through the creation, setting and/or modification of organizational values perhaps improve or introduce new ways of thinking which may lead to new behaviours within the organization?

If organizational values set the tone of employee behaviour within organizations, then establishing, creating and modifying values can be an extremely powerful function. Where do organizational values come from? If values emerge from the shared realities expressed by organizational members through myths, stories, mission statements, slogans, decisions and other communication rules (Shockley-Zalabak, 2002), does a cohesive and consistent set of values provide organizations with a strong identity and better chances of surviving turmoil, change and uncertainty?

While organizational values' integrative function have been criticized for its potential to control employees (Gabriel, 1999; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Barker, 1993, 1999), they have also been found to be irrelevant because of employee cynicism for management fads combined with a bland set of statements (Murphy & Davey, 2002).

But how do individuals develop values? And how do organizations develop values?

Individual values are premised on a moral framework and have been described as the 'oughtness'—or what an individual ought to do (Rokeach, 1968, cited in Murphy & Davey, 2002). Some scholars argued the need to differentiate between individual, group and organizational values depending on the stage of the organizational change (Maierhofer et al., 2003). These distinctions are useful especially when assumptions are made regarding an individual's value system as automatically similar to the employing organization's value systems.

However, organizations are looking for ways to 'align' individual values with organizational values, and vice versa especially during cultural change programs (Sullivan et al., 2002). Organizational culture change programs provide an opportunity for organizational values to be revisited, renewed and re-created. During this time, people involved in the organizational change process also have the opportunity to reflect, explore possibilities, initiate new ways of thinking and doing within the organization. When values are being reviewed and/or being developed, individuals may need to go back to their personal value orientations (Shockley-Zalabak, 2002, pp. 434-437).

For this reason, one's involvement in the organizational value-setting process could indicate whether the individual practitioner can enact the 'conscience' role of the group or organization. While public

relations scholars and practitioners continue to discuss their moral agency role within the context of ethical public relations practice, is it possible to enact a true and genuine conscience role within a predominantly managerial/functionalist perspective?

Several management textbooks assert that the development of vision and mission statements, and value statements all form part of the strategic planning process (Robbins & Mukerji, 1990; Mintzberg, 1994). And yet at the same time, the setting of vision, mission and values are said to activities within the realm of the 'leader', rather than the 'manager'. The problem is that most public relations educators and scholars tend to guide future practitioners toward a managerial role, with the penultimate goal being, a seat at the 'boardroom table'. The question of course is what happens when practitioners gain a seat at the table? Do they enact managerial or leadership roles?

Are public relations/communication practitioners involved in the organizational value-setting process? If so, are they able to enact the organizational conscience role? If not, what roles do they enact? How do organizational factors affect the enactment of these roles? How do individual factors affect the enactment of these roles?

### **1.3 Scope and research approach**

This research focuses on exploring the range of public relations/communication roles in the organizational value-setting process in Australian companies within the context of a changing complex work and global environments. It is important to note that the research focus is on how (process) values are set rather than what (content) values are set. This distinction is made for several reasons: first, organizational values tend to be fairly generic; secondly, discussing specific organization's value statements may identify the respondents' organizations and compromise this research's confidentiality agreements; and perhaps most importantly, the value-setting process offers fascinating insights into the power plays within organizations. This focus on process reflects a dialectical view that is "fundamentally committed to the concept of process" purported by Benson (1977, p. 265).

The research draws on relevant concepts from systems theory, rhetorical theory and critical theory. Furthermore, this multidisciplinary research also reviews literature from management, social psychology, organizational communication, and public relations. This research also integrates public relations and organizational communication scholarship because as Cheney and Christensen (2001) argue, examining the organization's communicative activities with its internal and external audiences is

integral to understanding its identity. Similarly, examining individual practitioners' value-setting activities assist in understanding their professional identities as professional communicators.

Furthermore, this research applies the multiple perspective approach to explore various roles practitioners enact in undertaking their complex duties in response to calls by public relations and organizational communication scholars (Trujillo & Toth, 1987; Toth, 1992; Leitch & Neilson, 2001).

While the original premise of this research came from my familiarity with the dominant systems perspective, it became clear that confining the research to the dominant perspective was not sufficient for the current times. Applying multiple perspectives in public relations research opens up the field to the tensions and assumptions of conflicting and sometimes complementary paradigms (Trujillo & Toth, 1987, p. 226; Toth, 1992, p. 11). Given the current complexity of the environment and individual's lives, using a multiple perspectives approach presents a realistic, more meaningful and exciting way to study public relations roles.

On one level, this research combines a sociological and psychological bias reviewing literature in public relations, communication theory, organizational communication, and management scholarship. And on another level, this research applies approaches from the functionalist/systems, interpretive/rhetorical and critical/dialectic perspectives. To address concerns that interweaving these three perspectives may not work, the concepts in role theory are used in this research as threads to connect those perspectives together.

While Deetz (2001, p. 37) has cautioned scholars about the use of multiple perspectives in organizational communication research because of a tendency not to explain some assumptions, others (Trujillo & Toth, 1987; Toth, 1992; Heath, 1992; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996) have urged the application of multiple or additional perspectives both in public relations and organizational communication research. In their essays, they point to the value and benefits of the systems/functionalist, also referred to by others as instrumentalist, empirical-analyst (Cheney, 2000a, p. 29), interpretive/rhetorical, and critical/dialectical perspectives. In a way, applying the multiple perspectives 'lens' as a means of interpreting the data is already indicative of the interpretive approach Cheney (2000a) describes. Because these perspective labels are not as clear-cut as they seem and that the debates on these issues are still ongoing, they are used in this thesis with much hesitation. Nevertheless, it is important to briefly mention the concepts from which they are drawn.

While organizational communication scholars have previously applied multiple perspectives in their research (Trujillo, 1992; Zorn et al., 2000), not very many public relations scholars have actually applied this approach in their research.

This multiple perspectives approach will draw largely from the framework used by Trujillo and Toth (1987) who admit that the approaches are not mutually exclusive, but which in my view is appropriate for examining the roles of practitioners in organizational value setting. Figure 1.1 illustrates the framework to be used in this research.

*Figure 1.1 Multiple perspectives framework (adapted from Trujillo & Toth, 1987)*

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>
<b><i>Functionalist/systems</i></b>	Practitioner roles, reporting relationships, organizational structures/systems, responsibilities, activities, organizational profiles, practitioner focus on effectiveness/efficiency, managerial bias, alignment of organization’s needs with publics
<b><i>Interpretive/rhetorical</i></b>	Practitioners as producers of symbols, discourse, meaning; as corporate advocates; as shapers/creators of organizational culture; and as receivers and interpreters of organizational symbols
<b><i>Critical/dialectical</i></b>	Practitioner views of their power, control and influence in the organization; involvement in process and dialogue; and their ability to effect organizational change

#### 1.4.1 Functionalist/systems perspective

The functionalist perspective assumes “a more objective view of organizations and focus on the *instrumental* aspect of organizational life” and approaches tend to be concerned with maintaining order, organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Trujillo & Toth, 1987, p. 202). Three approaches within this perspective are relevant to public relations, one of which is systems theory (the other two being, [neo] classical management and human resources). While elements of (neo) classical and human resources approaches are still relevant to public relations practice and to this study in particular, we will focus on systems theory because of its dominance in public relations research especially from the Grunig’s work.

Systems theory traces its beginnings from Biology and was popularised by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Littlejohn, 1999). A system comprises four elements—objects, attributes, internal relationships among its objects, and an environment—and is defined as ‘a set of things that affect one another within an environment and form a larger pattern that is different from any of the parts’ (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 41). The basic premise in systems theory is that organisms are members of a system who need to adapt to its environment to survive. So when discussed in an organizational context, systems comprise parts of a whole and its parts may be interdependent, reflect a hierarchy, possess self-regulation and control; interact with its environment, aim for balance for its self-maintenance, adapt to change, and aim to achieve an end goal through different means (Littlejohn, 1999, pp. 41-45).

Within system theory is the concept of cybernetics which refers to the “study of regulation and control in systems” (cited in Littlejohn, 1999, p. 52). Originating from mechanical systems, cybernetics has been applied to communication and organizational systems in using feedback to determine the changes and adjustments necessary for the system to stabilise and/or be effective. Gauging what adjustments need to be made requires a “cybernetic device” which consists of a “sensor, comparator and an activator” and Littlejohn (1999) describes the interaction between these components.

The sensor provides feedback to the comparator, which determines whether the machine is deviation from its established norm. The comparator then provides guidance to the activator, which produces an output that affects the environment in some way. This fundamental process of output-feedback-adjustment is the basis of cybernetics (p. 48).

Applying the principles of cybernetics to the current study, one needs to go back to Burson’s (1987, cited in Johnson & Zawawi, 2004) earlier definitions of public relations roles where these same concepts are mentioned: sensor of social change, corporate conscience, communicator, and corporate monitor.

Applied to organizations, systems theory focuses on the elements within the group and how they relate to each other through the network of sub-systems within it. Allport’s (1962, cited in Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 31) definition of a social system that as a “structuring of events or happenings rather than of physical parts” suggests that social systems have a structure because of their function. Because systems theory is used to understand how processes work, effectiveness and productivity become an essential purpose. From this perspective, the elements of the organization are perceived as undertaking a function for the survival of that system, thus the functionalist approach. Because of its scientific roots, systems theory has been associated with scientific, positivist research.

Burrell and Morgan's (1979) typology however defines functionalism as synonymous with the empirical and positivist approach to research. The functionalist approach to social science assumes that the world comprises 'empirical artefacts and relationships' which can be studied and measured using scientific approaches (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26). It is based on this objectivity and its applications to communication theory that systems theory has been criticised over the years (see for example Littlejohn, 1999, pp. 56-59; Creedon, 1993; Deetz, 2001, pp. 21-22).

For this research, the functionalist/systems approach underpins the examination of the relationship of roles with organizational structures, the practitioners' reporting and relationships, and the practitioners' relationships with other members of the organization. This research is also positivist because it analyses empirical data collected from interview participants.

As Trujillo and Toth (1987) concluded, the functionalist approach's predilection for "measurable and quantifiable indicators for organizational effectiveness" presents a managerial bias which can in fact be limiting for public relations practitioners. Because of this bias, references to the functionalist/systems construct will be hereby referred to as the managerial/functionalist perspective. This phrase is used based on the discussion by Zorn, Page and Cheney (2000) about leadership and change. They argued that managerialist discourse is necessary for change communication (Zorn et al., 2000, p. 523) and since organizational value setting falls within the rubric of organizational change, it is deemed appropriate for this study.

Within the system theory framework, this research will focus on the relationships within the organization and the roles enacted by the communication practitioner within that context. This research acknowledges that various factors in the internal and external environment affect how employees within the organization enact their roles. Furthermore, the systems theory framework is useful because it emphasises the need for adaptation within a continually changing environment.

While systems theory, which focuses on control and stability, and critical theory, which focuses on power relations and control, may seem to be diametrically opposed, they may not necessarily be so (Mumby, 1997, cited in Littlejohn, 1999, pp. 226-227). In applying these concepts to organizational communication, unobtrusive control within organizations is related to the concept of hegemony, which refers to the "process of domination, in which one set of ideas subverts or co-opts another" (Littlejohn,

1999, p. 229). Concepts such as dissensus<sup>2</sup> and dialectics<sup>3</sup>, often mentioned in critical studies, share some commonalities with concepts of pluralism and requisite variety, which characterise open systems. These commonalities refer to the value given to a multiplicity of voices, viewpoints and perspectives.

The predominance of the systems theory paradigm, which underpins the managerialist/functionalist approach, in public relations has been criticised by Pieczka (1996) primarily because its general acceptance as a theoretical framework by many scholars have prevented other questions from being asked. In her critique of the dominance of the Excellence model in public relations research, Creedon (1993) earlier emphasised the absence of the infrasystem within the systems theory framework. While seemingly radical for a discipline warming up to the comfort of managerial acceptance, Toth and Heath's (1992) book, *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*, and L'Etang and Pieczka's (1996) book, *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations*, provide a crucial and timely reminder of the need for multiple perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches to the study and practice of public relations.

#### 1.4.2 Interpretive/rhetorical perspective

The interpretive approach examines “the *symbolic* aspects of organizational life” and how organizational members “use symbols to assign meanings to their organizational experiences” (Trujillo & Toth, 1987, p. 209). Littlejohn (1999, p. 199) defines interpretation as “an active, discipline process of the mind, a creative act of searching for possible meanings”.

As a research approach, interpretivism follows Cheney's (2000a) description with its five elements. Because these elements--the social actor, the researcher, the situation, the ‘text’ and the research process--makes sense of a phenomenon using a particular language, the interpretive approach is related to the rhetorical perspective. In fact, Cheney (2000a) cites Burke in saying that ‘research is an ongoing conversation’. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm seeks to understand the world as it is and as an emergent process (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28).

According to Trujillo and Toth (1987), “interpretive approaches invite public relations researchers and professionals to understand how organizations use symbols and how publics assign meaning to

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<sup>2</sup> Dissensus, a term meant as a counterpoint to consensus, is described as an orientation which considers struggles, conflicts and tensions (Deetz, 2001, p. 15). For an extensive discussion on the consensus-dissensus dimension see Deetz, 2001, pp. 11-15.

<sup>3</sup> Dialectic is defined as the “art of investigating the truth of opinions; the testing of truth by discussion” (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2004, p. 384).

organizational life and to society” (p. 210). They posit that sense-making, rhetorical and cultural approaches fall within the interpretive perspective.

Sense making focuses on the creation of meaning and includes context as integral to a richer and more nuanced analysis of organizational publics (Trujillo & Toth, 1987). The cultural approach as applied in this study examines how public relations and communication practitioners not only transmit but also shape organizational cultures. In particular, the practitioners’ involvement in organizational value setting is being examined. The rhetorical approach examines organizational discourse constructed by public relations/communication practitioners as well as explores the extent of argumentation, persuasion and influence.

As Skerlep (2001) lamented, rhetorical theory has yet to be integrated into public relations theory unlike in organizational communication where it has flourished. The hesitancy to integrate rhetorical theory has been attributed to rhetoric’s relations with persuasion, which Grunig had, in his criticism of Edward Bernays’ persuasive framework, equated to manipulation (1989, cited in Pfau & Wan, 2006). Marsh (2003, p. 352) cited Corbett’s definition of rhetoric as “the art or the discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience, whether that audience is made up of one person or a group of persons”.

Heath (1992) discussed the use of rhetorical perspectives in public relations from a historical and managerial point of view. Of particular interest is “rhetorical enactment theory”, which “reasons that all of what an organization does and says is a statement” (Heath 2001, p. 4). Following this view, the construction of organizational values statements is a rhetorical activity and if public relations/communication practitioners were charged with being involved in the ‘creation of organization’, then it seems useful to understand the kind of involvement they have in the process. Furthermore, this thesis examines the words and thoughts of the practitioner respondent to lend some light into their individual and organizational personae (Heath, 1992).

While the interpretive perspective, which Botan and Taylor (2004) referred to as the co-creational perspective of public relations, will be applied to this study using the sense making and cultural approaches, it will also focus on the rhetorical and suasive aspects of public relations practice on both methodological and analytical levels.



Positivist scholars, who come from the functionalist school, critique this approach as being too subjective and not generalizable (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 221). Critical scholars, on the other hand, accuse interpretive approaches as being conservative because they do not study the ideological underpinnings of the phenomenon (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 222). In fact, they contend that the cultural approach to studying organizations, which falls within the rubric of interpretive research, may in fact perpetuate the imposition of the dominant ideology (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 222).

Rhetorical studies examine individual and organizational discourse as symbols of meaning (Heath, 1993). As Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) explain, rhetorical and literary studies in organizations incorporate discourse analysis, argumentation and advocacy. They define discourse analysis as “the study of words and signifiers, including the use of language in context, and the meanings or interpretations of discursive practices” (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001, p. 79). While this study explores communication practitioners’ own interpretations of their roles and their organizational experiences particularly in the area of organizational value-setting process, it focuses on what Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) term as ‘communication rules’ and ‘conversational performances’ and ‘symbolic interaction’.

For this study, the rhetorical approach will be applied in several ways. The first application will analyse the respondents as organizational members in their roles as producers of corporate discourse. The rhetorical lens will also be applied in integrating the respondents’ voices and descriptions of their individual expressions and contexts as they relate their interpretation of their roles and involvement in value setting. Thirdly, the study explores the integration of the classical elements of rhetoric--argumentation and persuasion—within the context of a normative dialogical and dialectical role.

#### 1.4.3. Critical/dialectical perspective

Critical perspectives for this study will refer to its focus on power and control in organizations. Critical theory is a wide and expansive field and its origins can be traced to the ideas of Karl Marx’s critique of the political economy, Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action and Michel Foucault’s writings on sites of power (Mumby, 2001; Littlejohn, 1999). Various communication scholars (for example, Deetz, 2001; Mumby, 2000; Heath, 1992; Littlejohn, 1999) have comprehensively traced the history and scope of this field (which also includes feminist approaches) and while acknowledged in this thesis need not be repeated. However, in arguing for more critical theory in public relations scholarship, L’Etang (2005, p. 522) stated, “Critical Theory encourages us to be self-aware and transparent in the way we think, write and teach”.

Trujillo and Toth (1987, p. 218) incorporated political and radical change approaches within this perspective because the political approach assumes that an organization's internal and external publics have conflicting interests and "power is revealed in social influence attempts". On one hand, public relations is seen as a powerful resource used by corporations and governments to promote their causes (Beder, 2000; Ewen, 1996). On the other hand, public relations insiders still perceive they have limited influence and power because of their non-membership in the dominant coalition (Berger & Reber, 2006). The other view is that practitioners could use power to represent other publics and to influence the organization to behave in an ethical and socially responsible manner. This latter view is reflective of the radical change approach.

In particular, applications of the critical approach to organizational communication (Mumby, 2000, 2001) and to public relations (Motion & Weaver, 2005; Roper, 2005; L'Etang, 1996; Berger & Reber, 2006; Pieczka, 1996; Berger, 2005) that explored the notions of voice, diversity with a strong consciousness against hegemony or the assumed acceptance of dominant ideas will be integrated in the analysis of this research. Difference and dissensus are critical for dialogue and dialogue includes a dialectical process where people from various sides challenge and oppose each other (Mumby, 2000, p. 86). While dialectics is also defined as the "logical disputation" (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1992, p. 308), or the thesis-antithesis-synthesis process (Mason, 1969), the dialectical approach in this context is drawn from Benson's (1977) commitment to process and that of becoming (p. 265). As such, critical/dialectical perspectives are employed in this research through the exploration and discussion of power, control and influence that the public relations/communication practitioner enacts wittingly or unwittingly in their roles. Further, the practitioners' involvement in process is explicated and extended.

Incorporating the critical/dialectical perspective to the study of public relations/communication practitioner roles provides an understanding of the practitioners' contribution to the emancipation or oppression of the publics they supposedly represent. In particular, it is useful to investigate the extent practitioners are complicit in encouraging or discouraging voice and diversity, or if they are merely 'pawns' whose voices are also suppressed.

In this study, the critical/dialectical approach will include an examination of the communication practitioner's power and influence in the organization, involvement in process and dialogue, and ability and potential to effect change within the organization.

This research acknowledges the criticisms and limitations of each of the theoretical frameworks mentioned above and yet find many similarities and value for its features. Could an inclusion of the concepts of power, control and influence assist in exploring what roles communication practitioners enact within an ethical and socially responsible framework?

Could the combination of the structural factors of an individual's role in the organization, the interpretive meaning of symbols and words, and the critical factors of power, control and influence provide a better understanding of the practitioner's involvement during the organizational value-setting process? Furthermore, does this study's use of the agency role as a way of describing ethical, socially responsible and professional practitioners extend practitioners' potential role as conscience leaders?

For the purposes of this study, public relations and communication practitioners will be referred to as public relations/communication practitioners or just practitioners, with the assumption that they have responsibilities for internal and external communication, unless otherwise specified. Organizational values, otherwise referred to as values, will refer to the organization's espoused vision, mission, purpose, values statements and code of conduct/ethics of an organization. Also, organizational value setting will refer to the process of establishing, creating, modifying and re-creating organization's values. A glossary of acronyms used in the thesis appear in the preliminary pages.

#### **1.4 Overview of the Study**

To address the research aim of finding out whether Australian public relations/communication practitioners enact the organizational conscience role, this study focuses on finding out the involvement of practitioners in the organizational value-setting process. Therefore the main research question is:

***What roles do public relations/communication practitioners enact in the organizational value-setting process?***

In exploring this key question, the following questions were investigated:

1. How do organizations set their values?
2. How are public relations/communication practitioners involved in the organizational value-setting process?
3. What individual and organizational factors determine the involvement of public relations/communication practitioners in the organizational value-setting process?
4. How do public relations/communication practitioners' perceptions of their power and influence affect their participation in the value-setting process?

5. How do practitioner perceptions of the public relations/communication function affect the roles they enact in the organization?

To answer the above questions, this thesis has been organized in the following manner.

The introductory chapter provides the context from which the research starts. By identifying the research problem, its aims and scope as well as the research approach, the chapter is able to establish the need for the research and its contributions to public relations scholarship.

To provide the background for this research, the literature review is presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Because of the extensive literature on public relations roles, organizational values, and power, control and leadership, they are allocated separate chapters to emphasise the differences in theoretical perspectives.

Chapter 2, Perspectives in Public Relations Roles Research, focuses on current perspectives in public relations roles research. This chapter starts with a discussion of some of the key concepts of role theory and agency that inform this research. The chapter proceeds to review the extant roles research based on the various perspectives and discusses how the issues of professionalism, ethics and social responsibility stress the need for a conscience role. In examining the existing literature on public relations and communication roles, the chapter highlights that: roles research is predominantly of a managerial/functionalist perspective; and that this predominant perspective has constrained public relations practitioners and scholars to think about public relations roles as critical leadership roles. This chapter asserts that exploring roles research from multiple perspectives provides more opportunities to explore the critical conscience role.

Chapter 3 explores the organizational value-setting process through examining the literature on organizational culture, value-based management, strategic planning and how organizational values are used as a means of control. This chapter explicates how communication practitioners are often involved in the creation of cultural artefacts in the organization and expected to undertake communication and control activities, but not necessarily in the construction of the organizational values. This chapter concludes by proposing the potential involvement public relations and communication practitioners in the organizational value-setting process.

Chapter 4 discusses how the concepts of power, control and influence impact on the capabilities of the practitioners to get involved in the organizational value-setting process. This chapter reviews the existing organizational communication and public relations literature that touches on the concepts of power and influences. It discusses the various sources of power, the kinds of controls, and the types of influence tactics available to practitioners. This chapter also discusses the use of persuasion and influence public relations and communication practitioners to gain compliance. It concludes by suggesting how knowledge of power and influence can assist practitioners enact an ethical and socially responsible role such as that of the organizational conscience.

Chapter 5, Methodology, describes the research approach, research design, the sampling design, the data gathering process, the research instrument, the data analysis, and a description of the sample as well as the limitations of the research. It explains why in-depth interviews were used to collect the information regarding communication practitioners' involvement in organizational value setting, as well as how the interview data were analysed.

Following this, Chapter 6, Results, reports the findings of the data gathering and reveals the extent and nature of the communication practitioners' involvement in organizational value setting. This chapter initially provides the context by describing the individual respondents and the organizations which they represent. Organized according to key themes drawn from the research questions, it then presents the detail and nuances of the responses by combining numerical and narrative presentations of the results.

In Chapter 7, Discussion and Analysis, the results are interpreted, analysed and discussed. This chapter presents the implications of the results and reveals a new framework that conceptualizes public relations roles as agency roles. The chapter also proposes a new way of thinking about public relations roles with its discussion of a new normative role.

The final chapter, Conclusion, draws together all the arguments and findings of the study and includes a section on implications for the industry and education. The chapter also offers some recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: PERSPECTIVES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The introductory chapter's discussion of the need to examine the role of public relations/communication practitioners in organizational value setting within the turbulent and complex environment establishes an opportunity to apply the multiple perspective approach in analysing public relations roles. While public relations roles research has been one of the most popular research topics (Pasadeos et al., 1999, p. 47), none have actually used this approach nor have any examined the public relations practitioner's role in organizational value setting. Because public relations is a young discipline, public relations scholars and practitioners need to continually define and re-define the field to establish its identity and one such obvious way is to explicate the function and role of the practice.

To find out whether public relations/communication practitioners enact the organizational conscience role through their involvement in organizational value setting, understanding key concepts of role theory is required. The chapter presents the major studies and concepts in public relations roles research based on the three perspectives. Discussing public relations roles through the different perspectives reveals the dominance of the managerialist/functionalist perspective and the need to incorporate other perspectives in public relations roles research. This chapter also explains why the conscience role is the key to a professional, ethical and socially responsible practitioner.

Chapter 2 has five sections. The first section discusses the key concepts of role theory that apply to this research namely, identity, expectations, activities/involvement, multiple roles and role conflicts. The next three sections describe the extant research on public relations/communication roles using the three perspectives applied in this research: managerial/functionalist; rhetorical/interpretive; and critical/dialectical. The last section discusses the different factors that currently determine public relations roles.

## 2.2 Key concepts of Role Theory

To understand public relations and communication roles requires an investigation of how roles are developed. Several scholars in social psychology, organizational behaviour and organizational communication have examined the concepts of role theory.

The notion of role has been defined in several ways. Following the theatre perspective, Sarbin and Allen (1968) describe role as that which “denotes that conduct that adheres to certain ‘parts’ (or positions) rather than to the players who read or recite them” (p. 489). Drawing from this definition, the study of roles arguably involves a study of behaviours, activities and involvement as they relate to the notion of conduct. Social psychologists Katz and Kahn (1966) argued that role behaviour, along with norms and values, comprise the bases of social systems. They emphasised the behavioural aspects associated with roles in their definition of organizational roles, and stressed how the role can be detached from the individual’s persona.

...roles are standardised patterns of behavior required of all persons playing a part in a given functional relationship, regardless of personal wishes or interpersonal obligations irrelevant to the functional relationship (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 37).

Biddle (1979) explored the role concept based on expectations, identities and behaviours. In his book on role theory, he discussed the various concepts that are covered in this current research and recognised the various orientations by previous role theorists such as Talcott Parsons, G. H. Mead and J. L. Moreno (Biddle, 1979, p. ix).

The concepts of identity and social position, within the context of role theory (Biddle, 1979), are particularly relevant to the current study of public relations/communication practitioners’ role in an organizational process such as value setting. Understanding how the practitioner’s expectations of his/her role, as well as how others’ expectations of his/her role, is important in the practitioner’s conceptualisation of his/her identity and expected behaviour. Knowing how the practitioner conceives his/her identity, the role expectations and behaviours attached to those expectations establish the feasibility of the public relations/communication practitioners enacting the organizational conscience role.

### 2.2.1 Identity, expectations, behaviours

2.2.1.1 *Identity*. Unlike role, identity refers to “a symbol that is used to designate one or more human beings” (Biddle, 1979, p. 89). In this limited context, identity relates to “labelling” and one’s identity is expressed through the use of titles rather than positions and labelling is used to help simplify the

discussion (Biddle, 1979). So for example, a practitioner's identity is expressed as 'the company wordsmith' rather than senior manager.

Moreover, Biddle (1979) differentiated identity from position by referring to the latter as "an identity used for designating two or more persons who presumably share one or more overt characteristics" (p. 91). To further explain the concept of position, he distinguished between structural position, social and membership position. For example, in this study, the practitioner's position as a Group Corporate Affairs Manager is the structural position but her membership or otherwise in the inner circle is reflective of her social and membership position.

For the purposes of this study, Biddle's (1979) distinction of roles as "classifications of behavior" and positions as "classifications of human beings" (p. 93) will be applied. As such, the concept of identity will refer to the persons who are labelled as public affairs, corporate communication, or internal communication practitioners. These practitioners hold managerial positions within their organization and enact a set of communicative and managerial behaviours.

Deetz (2001) critiques the notion of a unitary autonomous identity as a way of suppressing conflicts, encouraging security and stability, and establishing dominant and marginal groups (pp. 32-33). He continues that in today's highly globalized and interconnected societies, fragmented identities with their conflicting discourses are inevitable (Deetz, 2001, p. 33).

Following this reasoning, the question is whether the dominant view of public relations/communication practice needs to be reviewed as it inhibits the creation of new identities that could allow the practitioner to be more adaptive to change. Trujillo and Toth (1987) posed a similar concern when they discussed the dominance of the functionalist/managerial perspective in public relations research, "Such a managerial bias, however, can be unnecessarily constraining and can lead to a certain amount of organizational myopia" (p. 209).

Central to this study is the assumption that identity, both at an individual and organizational level, is relevant to the concept of roles. On the individual level, a communication practitioner's identity is determined by one's performance of one's roles. So for example, if a communication practitioner is expected to be the 'writing expert', then the practitioner takes on a 'wordsmith' identity. On the other hand, if the practitioner has demonstrated performance in managing a crisis, then the practitioner takes on the identity of a crisis communication expert.



At the organizational level, identity is linked to the organization's external reputation for which public relations/communication practitioners are becoming responsible (Murray & White, 2005). It is the practitioners' professional responsibility with the organizational identity that presents conflicts, and opportunities, with their own individual identities. Cheney and Christensen (2001) point to the public relations/communication practitioners' major involvement, as issues managers, in constructing identities for their respective organizations "obsessed" to stand out with "a distinct and recognizable identity in this cluttered environment" (p. 240). At the same time, the authors also exposed the difficulties with clearly defined organizational identities because of the blurring of organizational boundaries (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 243; Cheney et al., 2004, p. 119).

The individual vis-à-vis organizational identity dilemma is linked to questions about practitioners' interests and loyalty. When Berger (2005) asked, "Whom do practitioners serve? Their own career interests? The organization? The profession? The interests of others in the margins? The larger society?" (p. 23), he suggested that the answers to these questions are related to roles enacted by practitioners.

Those serving their own interests will adopt roles that best accommodate achievement of self-interests. Those who serve the organization and achievement of its financial and market objectives are likely to take on roles wherein they carry out instrumental directives as efficiently and effectively as possible. Those who seek to serve the interests of the organization and greater society are likely to find their roles to be complex and constrained (Berger, 2005, p. 23).

A recent study cited pragmatic reasons why many practitioners defer to organizational interests and thereby demonstrate loyalty and commitment, over and above personal and societal interests (Berger & Reber, 2006).

I mostly serve my company because it's my livelihood; the company pays my bills, not the publics or society at large. That's not to say I don't hear my publics and express their voices in the organization. I do. But in the end, usually, I serve the organization first. I'm just being honest (in Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 26).

The question of practitioners giving up their individual identity in lieu of their assumption of their organization's identity as a requisite for their employment is a crucial point in this discussion. Is relinquishing one's identity, and consequently one's values, upon employment a clear expectation of the employer or is that an assumption made by the practitioner?

The concept of an individual identifying with one's organization or one's CEO is also related to role expectations and leads to the notion of identification. Identification refers to an individual's positive

emotional and psychological attachment to a person, idea or thing (Biddle, 1979, p. 299). In the organizational sense, employees who share the values and principles of the company are said to identify with the organization's values (Conrad & Poole, 2002). Several identification strategies, which include communication tactics, are employed by organizations under the guise of socialisation or unobtrusive control. Employees' responses to these strategies may vary from outright acceptance, scepticism or outright resistance (Conrad & Poole, 2002, pp. 103-105).

2.2.1.2 *Expectations*. One of the key difficulties public relations/communication practitioners face in enacting their roles is the expectations they have of themselves and the expectations others have of them. Expectation is "a statement that expresses a reaction about a characteristic of one or more persons" and is distinguished between overt (enunciations), covert (conceptions) and written (inscriptions) expectations (Biddle, 1979, p. 119).

Shared expectations, in particular, suggest that people behave according to their own expectations of the roles they hold. Furthermore, "...persons should become unhappy when their expectations are not met, thus be willing to influence others toward conformity" (Biddle, 1979, p. 116). So if practitioners do not meet their own expectations of their own roles, such as being the organizational conscience, they are unlikely to convince others to expect them to be the organizational conscience.

It is important however to distinguish between *individual* and *shared* expectations. Individual expectations refer to expectations "held uniquely by a single subject person" whereas shared expectations are those that "correspond among many subjects" (Biddle, 1979, p. 123). Accordingly it is assumed that when people have shared expectations, they are expected to behave in the same way. However Biddle (1979) questioned whether the assumption is applicable to larger organizations where not every member may know the role (and subsequent expectations) enacted by the different individuals in the organization. This is true for practitioners who belong to very large organizations that operate in different countries such as the respondents in this study. Furthermore, in Western societies, organizational members may construe this lack of knowledge of others' role either as a matter of privacy or a lack of concern.

Another important distinction is between *personal* and *positional* expectations (Biddle, 1979). Personal expectations refer to one's regard of an individual because of their personal relationship resulting from a direct experience. So one would expect certain behaviours of our family and friends based on one's experience with the object. Positional expectations on the other hand are expectations we hold for

people in certain 'positions' or occupations such as the doctor, politicians, teachers, CEOs, or in this case, public relations/communication practitioners. Expectations for people in these positions tend to be abstract and are usually shared.

So does the practitioner's self-expectations determine his/her public relations role enactment (Lauzen, 1992)? Can the practitioner's expectations of oneself as organizational conscience affect others' expectations of his/her role? This distinction between expectations for self, is referred to as 'own position' and expectations for others, is referred to as 'alien position' (Biddle, 1979, p. 124-125). He posits that one's expectations of what one's role is may be defined by his or her own interpretation or how one defines others' expectations of his or her role. For example, how public relations practitioners define their roles may depend on how they want to define their roles based on their prior experience and certain career goals which they want to achieve, as well as what the CEOs want them to achieve for that role. This implies that practitioners do have the potential to think of themselves and make others think of their roles as organizational conscience if they so interpret their role to be such. The potential of defining one's role is indicated by this notion of 'own position' and demonstrates how practitioners can really write their own position descriptions. Defining one's role is similar to that of 'role-making' in which the "the role receiver actively participates in defining the role, especially during the early stages of a dyadic relationship" (Graen, 1976, cited in Johnson, 1989, p. 255).

Furthermore, are the role expectations of public relations/communication practitioners influenced by their educational experience? Defining public relations roles are a staple in most public relations textbooks (see for example, Cutlip et al., 2000; Johnston & Zawawi, 2004). Most of the same also perpetuate the predominant managerial/functionalist perspective of the public relations role that is reflective of the US-centric public relations scholarship. In Australia as in other parts of the world (Sriramesh, 2004; Van Ruler et al., 2004), the increased enrolments of public relations students over the last 20 years have seen many young practitioners educated in the US-style public relations curriculum which has its epistemological basis on the managerial/functionalist paradigm.

So educated practitioners enter the workforce with certain role expectations, and are then socialized to learn about organizational culture, and acceptable standards of behaviour (Jablin, 2001; Cheney et al., 2004). These personal expectations intersperse with other employees' expectations and more importantly, the superiors' expectations of the public relations/communication practitioner role. Complicating role definitions, in addition to self and others' expectations, are the multitude of activities and responsibilities that fall under the rubric of public relations.

2.2.1.3 *Activities and Involvement*. To understand practitioner roles requires one to examine the activities practitioners undertake to fulfil their role expectations. As DeSanto and Green (2004) asserted, public relations research scholars have not studied what public relations managers do, that is, what managerial activities they undertake on a regular basis. Accordingly, they interviewed and analysed the diaries of UK and US senior public relations practitioners and found almost half of both British and American practitioners' time was allocated to meetings, and planning only accounted for 10 percent of their time. While their research was useful in identifying the specific task activities on a regular basis, it does not provide detail as to the nature and purpose of the meeting, who was leading the meeting, who was in the meeting and the outcomes of those meetings. It is quite possible that critical decisions may have been made at those meetings that would determine whether the practitioner was enacting a leadership, managerial or technical role, and stress the distinction between 'membership in' and 'active involvement in' the dominant coalition.

As Berger (2005) describes, the dominant coalition is the "group of power insiders [who] makes strategic choices, allocates resources, and influences public relations practices" (p. 8) in which public relations practitioners aim to belong to effectively influence their organizations toward ethical and socially responsible behaviour. For this research, the value-setting process is used as the operational definition of organizational processes because of two reasons: value-setting is a strategic management activity (J Grunig & L Grunig, cited in Bowen, 2000); and that process by which organizational values are constructed somehow reflects an organization's ethical position and view relative to the extent employees are invited to be involved in the process (Heath, 2001).

Roles are differentiated from activities in that "...a *role* constitutes those behaviours that are characteristics of persons in a context, whereas an activity is defined as a temporary but characteristic co-occurrence of interdependent roles" (Biddle, 1979, p. 228).

In determining the communication practitioner's roles and activities in the value-setting process, examining their involvement in the organizational process is appropriate. Involvement, according to Biddle (1979, p. 326) refers to the "degree to which the person invests effort or is organismically engaged in role performance."

Involvement therefore means that the individual actively contributes, invests time and effort in the process. Some practitioners get involved in an activity or a process because it is an expected part of

their role. Some however choose to get involved as an additional responsibility to their primary role, perhaps because they want to, not necessarily because they have to. Whether their reasons are self-serving, altruistic, or even political, it still remains that the choice was theirs.

One's involvement in an activity suggests an emotional and personal attachment to a role that goes beyond the technical requirements of the role. In some instances it is used as a coping strategy for those who are experiencing role strain (Biddle, 1979) or role conflict (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The concept of involvement has social as well as personal effects (Biddle, 1979, p. 326). For example, some individuals choose, even volunteer, to get very involved in a project for either their individual satisfaction, or that of others', who may include their superior. Others may choose to get involved to 'say' that they are involved or be perceived as a 'team player'. Others may get involved because doing so puts them in a privileged position of belonging to a 'special projects team'. That is why, in this study, the practitioners were asked what involvement they have in the organizational value-setting process as well as the strategic planning process. It is important to follow up these questions with the kind of involvement, and level of involvement they have with the organizational processes in the study.

Employee involvement has been defined as a "a participative process to use the entire capacity of workers, designed to encourage employee commitment to organizational success. This process typically comes about by giving employees some combination of information, influence, and/or incentives" (Seibold & Shea, 2001, p. 667). In their research, Seibold & Shea (2001) suggested that employees' perceptions of their "control, personal influence and self-efficacy" could influence their satisfaction (p. 687). In their analysis of five of the most popular employee participation programs in North America, they found that the processes were "not necessarily the most democratic" (Seibold & Shea, 2001, p. 689). Their findings supported critical scholars' responses to employee participation programs as "the universalization of managerial interests" (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). Based on this study, if public relations and communication practitioners perceive that they are active participants in the organization, and that they exercise power and influence in their organization, are they likely to be satisfied with their roles and their organizations and unlikely to act as the organizational conscience?

With numerous expectations of the public relations/communication role within contemporary organizations, it is not surprising to realise that practitioners end up with multiple roles.

### 2.2.2 Multiple roles and role conflicts

Because organizations are made up of several subsystems, public relations/communication practitioners tend to be involved in multiple roles and activities. So for example, the communication role is expected to perform activities such as undertaking research, monitoring the media, developing key messages, creating the channels, measuring the impact of communication programs. As such, the communication role will most likely be located within the Corporate Communications or Corporate Affairs department, which can house multiple roles such as external affairs advisor, internal communications specialist and so on. In large-sized organizations, these roles can be assumed by different individuals, or by one individual in smaller organizations.

Furthermore, as the practitioner goes up the hierarchy of large organizations, the more complex their roles become (Katz & Kahn, 1966). When individuals enact multiple roles, it is inevitable that they have to decide on which role is predominant (Johnson, 1989, p. 254; Floyd & Lane, 2000) or salient in a particular situation. In a study of managerial roles, Floyd and Lane (2000) distinguished between primary and secondary roles. Echoing Mintzberg's suggestion, they described managers' primary roles as those that "involve gathering and dissemination of information, making managers a nexus for information flows within the organization" (1973, cited in Floyd & Lane, 2000, p. 157). Secondary roles, on the other hand, are "sets of behaviours that support the organization's objectives but that are less closely linked to the day-to-day operational functions of a position" (Floyd & Lane, 2000, p. 158). Understandably, primary roles are more explicit.

The notion of multiple roles suggests that it is not only the ambiguity or lack of clear definitions of public relations that accounts for the multiple roles enacted by public relations/communication practitioners but that most individuals enact multiple roles regardless of their title or position in the organization anyway. The question here is how can the conscience role become the primary or predominant role of the public relations/communication practitioner.

While the four models of public relations popularised by Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe the evolution of the practitioner role from a press agent, to a public information specialist, and then on to a negotiator and relationship manager, as seemingly distinct roles, other research (Broom, 1982) suggested that practitioners enact multiple roles within the scope of their responsibilities.

One seemingly obvious consequence of multiple roles is somehow taken for granted. Public relations/communication practitioners are often perceived and expected to assume the organizational

role especially when they undertake the role of organizational spokesperson such that the practitioner assumes the identity and persona of the organization as part of his/her employment. What has not been asked is how the individual practitioner's identity and persona react when individual identity defers to the organizational identity. As previously mentioned, multiple expectations by different people lead individuals to develop multiple roles. Multiple roles then lead to conflict especially when it comes to prioritising tasks or activities within the same position. Katz and Kahn (1966, pp. 184-185) identified four types of role conflict namely, intrasender, intersender, interrole, person-role.

The intrasender role conflict occurs when the expectations from a role set are incompatible. For example, the CEO asks the public relations practitioner to find out through the grapevine how the employees feel about a new policy and yet warns the practitioner about violating the employees' trust.

When expectations of several people about an individual's role do not match, that can be referred to as intersender conflict. For example, if the CEO expects the public relations practitioner to listen in on the conversations in the tea room and corridors about the new policy, and on the other hand, the employees expect the public relations practitioner to not report employee dissatisfaction to the CEO's office.

Interrole conflict, on the other hand, occurs when the expectations of one role is incongruent with the expectations of another role played by the same person. Conflicting demands of work and home (eg parental role) are known sources of conflict.

Person-role conflict occurs when the expectations of the role contradict the person's values, needs or capabilities. For example, a public relations practitioner may be expected by his superiors to wine and dine an influential journalist in an effort to get a damaging story from appearing on the front page but doing so is against the practitioner's personal and professional ethics.

Furthermore, role conflict can also occur when a practitioner's individual values conflict with the organization's values because the practitioner's individual values can deter him/her from enacting the role expected by the organization. When the practitioner is involved in the organizational value-setting process, these conflicts become more apparent. However, it is more important to recognise these conflicts rather than submerge them during the process. This process in fact provides public relations/communication practitioners as well as other organizational members involved in the process an opportunity to reflect on their individual values vis-à-vis the organizational values.

Because public relations/communication practitioners enact boundary-spanning roles<sup>4</sup>, they are likely to experience role conflicts (Dayrit, 1986; Leichty & Springston, 1996; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Furthermore, because public relations/communication practitioners occupy middle manager positions (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Moss & Green, 2001), they experience more role conflicts because of the differing sets of expectations coming from their superiors and their subordinates.

For example, managers who are in the midst of organizational change may have different expectations—some look forward to it, some do not see the need for it. The public relations/communication manager who may not see the need for it, however, must enact a different role as a member of the senior management team. The conflict becomes exacerbated especially if this reluctant senior manager's role is required by his/her superiors to drive the engagement process.

Multiple roles will naturally tend to result in questions about organizational commitment. An earlier study (Randall, 1988) explored these concepts and found that organizational commitment is not necessarily affected by other roles except when the other roles are also outside jobs.

When the practitioner assumes the managerial role as the primary role and the conscience role as the secondary role, it could lead to questions of conflict. Alternatively, if the role does not clearly define the primary role, then it arguably leads to ambiguity and the practitioner resorts to the default role which is the managerial role.

To summarize, concepts in role theory such as expectations, involvement, multiple roles and role conflict as well as the concepts of identity frame the questions and analysis in this research. Understanding these concepts present a useful framework from which to analyse the involvement of communication practitioners in the organizational value-setting process, and how their roles are determined by their expectations, activities and behaviours. Now that the key concepts of role theory relevant to this research have been discussed from a predominantly social science perspective, the next section will examine the public relations/communication roles literature from the managerial/functionalist, rhetorical/interpretive, and critical/dialectical perspectives.

### **2.3 Managerial/functionalist perspective of PR roles**

The bulk of public relations roles research comes out of a managerial/functionalist perspective based on work by Glen Broom with David Dozier and their colleagues who, over the last 25 years, have

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<sup>4</sup> Boundary spanning refers to activities that are undertaken to connect the internal and external environments.



established most of the frameworks used in defining public relations roles. This section will briefly discuss the key research from this perspective, including the critiques and gaps in the research.

### 2.3.1 Public relations as a management function

The managerial/functionalist perspective has dominated public relations scholarship over much of the last 30 years. Defining public relations as the “management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6) heralded a wave of thinking of public relations as a management function. Introducing relationships into the mix gave another definition: “a management function that uses communication to facilitate relationships and understanding between an organization and its many publics” (McElreath, 1996, p. 3). Cutlip, Center and Broom’s definition of public relations in their eighth edition of the book, *Effective Public Relations* (2000), had evolved into a distinctly managerial function, too:

Public relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools (Cutlip et al., 2000, p. 4).

These managerial perspectives have been reinforced by several other scholars and practitioners (see Wilcox et al., 1992, pp. 5-7). Even Australian scholars Johnston and Zawawi (2004), while acknowledging that defining public relations as a management tool is inadequate, still emphasised the communication management aspects of public relations.

(Public relations is)... the ethical and strategic management of communication and relationships in order to build and develop coalitions and policy, identify and manage issues and create and direct messages to achieve sound outcomes within a socially responsible framework (Johnston & Zawawi, 2004, p. 6).

Industry associations such as the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) also define public relations from an organization-public framework reflective of the managerial/functionalist perspective: “The deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation (or individual) and its (or their) publics” (Public Relations Institute of Australia, n.d.). Despite definitively arguing that public relations is a management function, Dozier and Broom (2006) belatedly acknowledge that not every practitioner must be nor wants to be a manager (pp. 162-163). Many practitioners enter the field to exercise their creative and artistic skills and these technical functions need to be recognized as essential in strategic public relations.

### 2.3.2 Manager/technician typology

Another indication of the managerial/functionalist perspective is the public relations manager-technician role typology developed by Glen Broom often referred to as the “father of roles research in communication and public relations” (Dozier, 1992, p. 329). Broom and Smith’s (1979, cited in Moss & Green, 2001) study of practitioners found that based on their self-reported activities, practitioners could be categorized in the following roles—the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator and communication technician.

The expert prescriber was described as the person best informed about public relations issues and best qualified to answer public relations questions. The communication facilitator functioned as a “go-between” and was described as someone who mediated communication through information exchange. The problem-solving process facilitator referred to a person who assists management in step-by-step solution of problems. The fourth role, the communication technician was seen as a person who produces information material and implements decisions made by management (Dozier, 1992, p. 329).

Eventually, Broom and Smith’s (1979, cited in Dozier & Broom, 1995) four roles were categorized into two, namely, the communication manager and the communication technician roles. Dozier (1984, cited in Dozier, 1992) found that Broom’s first three roles were consistent with his concept of the public relations manager role, and that Broom’s communication technician was similar to the public relations technician. However, Dozier found two minor roles emerged in his research—media relations specialist and communication liaison but these were later discarded as they did not stand out in further analyses (1992, p. 333).

While the manager-technician typology gained a lot of ground in subsequent research, it was not without criticism. Johnson (1989) for example expressed that the assumption in previous role research is that “roles reside *within* (italics in original) the individual” (p. 244). He then reminded that Biddle (1979) and Katz and Kahn’s (1978) conception of role theory posits that there are two parties to roles—role senders and role receivers (cited in Johnson, 1989).

A feminist critique of the typology suggested that the push toward public relations managers as a preferred role over the technical role may be a result of the devaluation of the technically-oriented career choice of women (Creedon, 1991). Alternatively, women may be attracted to public relations because it enables them to write and be creative, tasks that are reflective of a technician’s role (Creedon, 1991) while the management role reflects a more masculine bias (Toth, 1989, cited in

Creedon, 1991). She countered earlier assertions by Grunig and Hunt (1984) that the ability to make organizational decisions distinguished the communication manager and communication technician roles by citing other research that proved decision-making occurs in other non-managerial roles (Ferguson, 1987; Childers, 1986; Dayrit, 1986; Johnson & Acharya, 1982; all cited in Creedon, 1991).

Other criticisms towards existing role research include the suggestion that roles are “static categories into which practitioners are pigeon-holed” and may incorporate a role-making process (Culbertson, 1991, cited in Moss & Green, 2001). Additionally, most of the current roles research is focused on gender discrimination and limits itself to US practice (Moss & Green, 2001; DeSanto & Moss, 2004). The dual-role typology has also been questioned regarding possible overlaps between the managerial and technician role as well as possibly obscuring subtle but significant differences between the practitioners’ tasks (Moss & Green, 2001, p. 119). Furthermore, the manager-technician dichotomy assumes that public relations managers cannot enact technician roles and that “a lot of meaningful information is lost by categorizing practitioners as either managers or technicians” (Leichty & Springston, 1996, p. 475).

Another criticism of roles research from this perspective is the use of quantitative methodology in isolating factors based on a series of Likert-scale statements. While it is understandable and still necessary to present quantitative, social scientific and rigorous methodology in building public relations role theory, it is time to explore more qualitative methodology in public relations roles research to understand the richness and complexities of contemporary practitioners. Following calls by scholars (Leichty & Springston, 1996; Moss & Green, 2001; DeSanto & Moss, 2004) to apply qualitative methodology in public relations roles research, this study employed in-depth interviews with practitioners.

Additionally, while the manager-technician typology provides a useful basis for identifying basic almost generic roles for practitioners, it could also limit the potential roles practitioners could enact. The next section presents the other public relations roles developed through a managerial perspective.

### 2.3.3 Managerial roles

Despite earlier research suggesting that not all practitioners prefer to be managers (Creedon, 1991), managerial roles for public relations practitioners were and still are positioned as ideal roles to enable their recognition and pave the pathway to membership in the dominant coalition.

As earlier suggested, perhaps this predominant view resulted from the oft-quoted communication management definition of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6) which many practitioners and academics alike have accepted unquestioningly. But it could also be the location of public relations practice within the realm of corporate enterprise and business that immerses scholars and practitioners in management literature.

Public relations managers following Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory would be well versed in its focus on efficiency based on his time and motion studies (Cheney, et. al., 2004). Efficiency however is different to effectiveness (Barnard, 1968 cited in Cheney et al., 2004). Effectiveness referred to the extent to which organization's goals are met while efficiency referred to the attention to and satisfaction of individual goals as they are aligned to the organization's goals (Barnard, 1968, cited in Cheney et al., 2004, p. 48). These two concepts frame the practitioners' continuing quest for the holy grail of measuring public relations effectiveness and reflect a functionalist/instrumentalist perspective (Trujillo & Toth, 1987).

Effectiveness and efficiency are issues public relations managers have to contend with especially when they are part of a subsystem within the organization brought about by the creation of 'prescriptions and proscriptions' of behaviours to be performed by individuals in certain roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 201). Because public relations managers become part of a managerial subsystem, issues such as authority and power are bound to emerge. The managerial system is distinguished from the institutional system in that the former is responsible for the "internal administration and the allocation of resources within the organization", while the latter is concerned with the "decision making of broad problems of external relations" (Parsons, cited in Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 96). This distinction seems to provide the limitations given to managers as against institutional leaders, as recent distinctions between leadership and management suggest.

Mintzberg's (1980) typology of ten managerial roles however blur rather than distinguish managerial and leadership roles. These ten roles fall broadly into three categories namely, interpersonal roles, informational and decisional. The following discussion of Mintzberg's (1980) typology provides a useful framework in analysing public relations practitioners as managers, and potentially, as leaders.

Interpersonal roles include the manager as the figurehead, the leader and the liaison. The manager enacting the figurehead role is mainly responsible for representing his/her organization and plays a primarily symbolic function because of his/her status and formal authority. The manager in a

leadership role is looked up to for guidance and motivation (Mintzberg, 1980, p. 60). This role is seen as an integrative role between the individual needs of employees and the organizational goals. Furthermore, the manager as leader defines the relationship between the manager and the subordinates, primarily because this will demonstrate how the manager's power is effective. The liaison role is expected to maintain relationships with various individuals within and outside the organization. Mintzberg (1980) admittedly defines this role as someone who interacts with other people to gain favours or information, an exchange relationship based on his/her authority and status.

Informational roles comprise the roles of monitor, disseminator and spokesperson (Mintzberg, 1980). The manager as monitor seeks and receives information, identifies problems and opportunities, and filters information which require decisions, attention by superiors and dissemination. The disseminator role's access to a huge amount of information allows the manager to send information from the external environment into the organization, or information from the internal environment to his/her work colleagues. Information disseminated by the manager can either be factual information, "ideas, trade gossip and instant communication" (p. 72), or value information, someone's preferences or value statements of what should be done as they relate to decision making. This role is particularly significant to this current study especially when, the "manager assimilates these statements, combines them according to the influence of the source, determines overall organizational preferences, and then disseminates these as organizational values" (Mintzberg, 1980, p. 73). The spokesperson role involves transmitting information from the organization to its external environment, speaks on behalf of the organization (and in this role, takes on the agency role) and, is expected to keep the organization's key influencers and the general public informed.

Mintzberg's (1980) third category, decisional roles, include the manager as entrepreneur, as disturbance handler, resource allocator and as negotiator. These roles represent the decision-making function of the manager which includes the strategy making process because of his/her formal authority and power. Mintzberg (1980) argues that these four roles are on a continuum and that the entrepreneur role is more on the proactive end while the rest are more on the reactive end.

The manager as entrepreneur initiates and designs the "controlled" changes in his/her organization through exploring opportunities and identifying problems, and deciding on the best options to achieve the overall organizational goals. The disturbance handler role is reactive because the manager tries to correct situations that occur outside his/her control. The resource allocator role involves allocating budget, time, staff, material and equipment, and reputation (Mintzberg, 1980, p. 85). The final

decisional role is that of negotiator where the manager ‘trades’ resources with other members of the organization as well as the external stakeholders. Because of the authority vested in the manager, he or she can negotiate on behalf of the organization or unit.

Based on the above descriptions of managerial roles, public relations/communication practitioners perform most of those functions depending on their level of seniority. Mintzberg (1980) seems to treat the three roles equally. Even more significant is his expectation of leadership functions within a managerial role, a view echoed by Robbins and Mukerji (1990). In traditional models, leaders are usually referred to as founders and/or the heads of the organization such as the CEO or the Managing Director. In his description of leaders as creators of culture, Schein (1992) referred to founders as leaders. In Mintzberg’s (1980) configuration, managers are expected to perform leadership roles—a concept that offers much promise to public relations/communication practitioners and other functional managers within the organization.

Although some of the roles and activities overlap, Mintzberg’s (1980) typology of managerial roles offers a useful framework in analysing the roles of public relations/communication practitioners in the value-setting process, albeit in a decidedly instrumentalist and functionalist perspective.

Another perspective to understanding public relations as a management function is through examining the activities expected of managers. To enact the management function means that the individual is involved in planning, organising, leading and controlling activities (Robbins & Mukerji, 1990, p. 7).

While the above activities are expectations of managerial roles, they do not necessarily reflect actual managerial behaviour. As Hales (1986) previously pointed out in his critical review of the managerial literature over 30 years, existing research did not distinguish between the managers’ behaviours and what they were meant to achieve. Furthermore, he contends that the literature has not been able to clearly define managerial behaviour vis-à-vis non-managerial behaviour. Summing up his critical review, Hales suggests the use of role theory as an analytical framework and a clarification of managerial work to include distinctions between managers, managerial teams and management (1986, p. 111). This current research addresses some of his concerns not only in using role theory as a framework but also in asking public relations/communication managers who *are* currently involved and who *should* be involved in organizational value setting.

The normative role for public relations/communication managers is again emphasised in Tsoukas' (1994) review of existing management literature. He argues that the four main perspectives-- management function, management task characteristics, management roles and management control-- need to be combined to develop a better understanding of management. He stressed the importance of not just defining what managers do but what they are capable of. This potentiality of the public relations/communication practitioner as the organizational conscience is the key question of this thesis. In explicating the activities public relations/communication practitioners currently do and not do provides empirical support on the potential roles in which practitioners can enact. Furthermore, this research also addresses some of Tsoukas' (1994) suggestions that scholarship should examine the causal powers of control, cooperation and efficiency and effectiveness considering the context and diversity of the people within the organization.

Moss and Green (2001) reviewed the existing roles literature that focused on generic managerial activities and found that public relations practitioners' managerial role activities include program planning, counselling, evaluating, decision making, budgeting and client meetings (Moss & Green, 2001, p. 120). However in their case study analysis of British Telecom, the authors realised the need to re-evaluate the existing frameworks because they were inadequate for explaining larger and complex organizations.

DeSanto and Moss (2004) investigated the managerial activities undertaken by public relations managers by interviewing 31 American and British senior practitioners and analysing their diaries to identify how much time they allocated to core activities. The results revealed that both US and UK practitioners spent the most time attending internal and external meetings. Quite surprisingly, the study revealed the planning only accounted for less than 10 % of the work time of both British and American senior practitioners. Some of their respondents explained that strategic planning was done at the start of the year and not part of their weekly operations. Similarly both groups spent relatively little time on writing and other technical or craft activity. Their research revealed the "technical, tactical, reactive and frenetic" nature associated with managerial work and that most practitioners were not involved in strategic planning activity. Their research emphasised the importance of asking public relations managers not just what their responsibilities are but what tasks they actually do.

While the above study is useful in understanding the time allocations US and UK senior practitioners spend on managerial tasks each week, it precludes the nature and magnitude of the tasks or decisions made during the enactment of those tasks. Moreover, the amount of influence and impact practitioners have in the organization may not be easily explained by the amount of time one spends doing particular

managerial tasks. Does the amount of time a practitioner spends on managerial activities indicate that the managerial role is his/her primary or predominant role? Furthermore, how does a practitioner account for activities not readily considered as a 'managerial task' such as, for example, liaison activities?

#### 2.3.4 Public relations practitioners as issues managers

Another indicator of the managerial/functionalist perspective prevalent in the public relations field is its embrace of the notion of 'issues management'. Since the concept of issues management was introduced, public relations and communication practitioners have claimed responsibility for the function. Public relations scholars (Cutlip et al., 2000) seem to view issues management as only a part of wide range of functions within the public relations role while Miller (1987, cited in Heath, 1990) counters by saying "issue(s) management isn't quite public relations".

While scholars have their own versions of defining issues management, the common ground seems to be in its identification of public policy issues that affect organizations (Heath, 1990; Cutlip et al., 2000). As such, issues management involves activities such as communicating, issue monitoring, achieving responsibility, and strategic planning.

Since the 1980s, issues management as a field within and outside public relations became popular especially as companies unable to manage issues found themselves dealing with crises. Heath (2002) later argued that issues management works best when it is proactive, multidisciplinary and when it combines four strategic options: strategic business planning; getting the house in order; scouting the terrain; strong defence and smart offence (pp. 210-211). Lauzen's (1994) survey of US practitioners revealed that managers were more likely than technicians to be responsible for issues management and that communication technicians indicated a reluctance to assume responsibility for issues management. That issues managers counsel their dominant coalitions and CEOs on ethical matters have been revealed in recent studies. Bowen's (2002) interviews with three issues managers at two global organizations revealed that effective issues management requires an integration of a well managed and strategic approach to ethics. She argues that the ethics should be "official, codified in a mission statement or ethics statement" and issues managers be trained to enact effectively as ethics counsel to the dominant coalition (p. 281). As the cases revealed, the incorporation of ethical analysis in the issues management process enabled the organizations to solve and avert problems. In analysing ethical decision-making, Bowen and Heath (2005) present Enron as a case study where ethics was relegated second only to legal



compliance. This case emphasised the need for issues managers to have the freedom to exercise their autonomy and “rational moral judgement without fear of reprisal” (p. 96).

These studies reveal how issues management has become a sub-function of public relations and communication practitioners which have made them valuable to the dominant coalition. Although the studies have not established that the ethical conscience role exists among organizational issues managers, they emphasised the opportunities and possibilities for practitioners to incorporate ethical counselling in their current roles. The authors also fall short of recommending more specific actions on how practitioners can exercise autonomy without being fearful. The current research explores how to address this shortfall.

#### 2.3.5 Public relations practitioners as environmental scanners

Roles research have also explored the activities that practitioners undertake and one of the activities considered critical to public relations’ definition as a management function is research. As mentioned earlier, managerial roles involved the acquisition of information from which decisions are to be made. Public relations/communication practitioners undertook evaluation research for three reasons, according to Dozier (1981, cited in Dozier, 1992, p. 337): preparation, dissemination and impact evaluation.

Scanning activities are part and parcel of the issue management role. Issue management has been defined as the activity that provides public relations the passport to the boardroom (Bowen, 2001). This has been possible because strategic planning requires information about internal and external environments and assessing threats and opportunities. And issues managers, or public relations/communication managers, through their scanning activities, gather information, assess the information’s relevance or potential relevance, monitor the differing opinions of different stakeholders and “shadow” stakeholders (L Grunig, et al., 2002) and pass the information on to management. In some cases, practitioners may be asked for a recommended action, and if practitioners recommend development of a policy, then their management role takes on a different dimension.

Environmental monitoring or scanning has been viewed to be part of the practitioners’ research portfolio. Dozier defines environmental scanning as “research...that serves to alert the organization to turbulence or change in the environment, changes that may affect the survival and growth of the organization” (1992, p. 339). Because of their wide range of contacts among the external stakeholders of the organization, public relations/communication practitioners are usually asked to undertake this role activity. Furthermore, communication practitioners are able to assess and filter which information will be salient for the organization based on their understanding of the strategic priorities of the

organization. For this role, communication practitioners require analytical skills and a broad understanding of the community issues to discern the issues required to bring into the attention of the senior management.

Dozier's 1986 research (cited in Dozier, 1992, pp. 340-341) indicated two approaches to environmental scanning—scientific and informal. The scientific style uses social scientific measurement to identify what is going on in the organization's environment, The informal style uses subjective and non-representative sampling techniques to elicit information from conversations with individuals and key contacts, just to know what is 'going on out there'. Dozier (1992) posits, "that practitioners in the manager roles engage in both scientific and informal program evaluation and environmental scanning with greater frequency than practitioners in a non-managerial role (p. 341)." He also said that for practitioners to help their organizations adapt to the changes within their environments, practitioners should be involved in the decision-making process and not "simply implement decisions made by others" (p. 342). Whether public relations/communication practitioners are involved in decision-making or merely implementers of others' decisions frames the inquiry of this current study.

#### 2.3.6 Public relations practitioners as mediators

The public relations/communication practitioner in a mediator role is based on the notion that the practitioner acts between two groups of people, normally his/her client organization and the stakeholders or publics with which he communicates. Because practitioners often act as conduits between two parties, for example between their client/organization, and the media practitioners, they are referred to as boundary spanners. Miles (1980) defined the organizational boundary as "the region in which elements of organizations and their environments come together and in which activities are performed of such a nature as to relate the organization more effectively to the outside world" (p. 317). Quite clearly, these definitions refer to the position as an interaction between the internal and external environment within a systems perspective. Differentiating the boundary-spanning function as an institutional-adaptive function, Miles (1980) developed a typology of boundary-spanning activities. These include: representing the organization, scanning and monitoring the external environment, protecting the organization, information-processing, gatekeeping, transacting with external elements, and linking and coordinating.

Public relations practitioners as boundary spanners have been established in previous research (Dayrit, 1986; Heath & Ryan, 1989; Leichty & Springston, 1996). In their survey of US practitioners, Leichty and Springston (1996) examined boundary-spanning activities as a means of understanding public

relations roles. They identified five different roles namely: internals, generalists, traditional managers, externals, and outliers. While their typology reflected major similarities to Broom and Smith's earlier typology, the group they called 'internal' is significant to this current study. Internals were practitioners who were "focussed on coordinating the PR efforts of the organization" and exercised a kind of process leadership (Leichty & Springston, 1996, p. 473). This group reported low levels of external activities such as advocacy, information acquisition and research. They instead focused on being the PR catalyst, gatekeeping and high levels of technical activity. Whether the Australian in-house practitioners interviewed for this current research share some similarities with their American counterparts will be examined.

Lauzen and Dozier (1992) stressed that public relations practitioners' enactment of the manager role is the critical link between external factors and internal consequences. They found that individual factors such as training, experience and role characteristics as well as organizational factors such as whether it has a closed or open 'dominant coalition' impinge on the enactment of the managerial role. Their study's findings imply that a practitioner's role as a mediator or linking person is in fact dependent on whether the dominant coalition allows the practitioners to enact a managerial role.

Similarly, the public relations practitioner as a relationship manager reflects a mediatory role. Scholars (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) developed the relational perspective of public relations that suggests public relations practitioners' are responsible for 'managing' relationships between the stakeholders. Managing relationships involves a focus on the interpersonal communication skills of the practitioners. It assumes, however, that practitioners in the normal course of their routine are in personal contact with their stakeholders. When practitioners engage in employee relations, community relations, lobbying and media relations, they usually contact cultivate relationships with a few key influential people. So the relationships referred here would be between the practitioner and the key influencers rather than all of the stakeholders within the stakeholder group.

For some practitioners especially those charged with a media relations responsibility, the conduit role is a comfortable one. They enact the roles of messenger and as such limit their 'responsibility' to what they are 'allowed' to say by their senior management. The problem with looking at practitioner roles as conduits is that it limits their activity as 'messengers' who are part of an information transfer process. Furthermore, some practitioners are not comfortable with disseminating messages for which they really have very minimal control.

Whether this mediating role, some refer to it as a linking role (see Creedon, 1991), occurs within the internal environment (often between management and employees) or in the external environment (between the organization and its publics), the question remains--what kind of activities and influence are the practitioner involved in? The public relations practitioner as boundary spanner is put in a position saddled with potential role conflicts particularly those relating to whose interests take priority.

To summarize, public relations as a management function has been useful in establishing public relations' legitimacy in the business world and academia over the last 30 years. However the predominance of the managerial/functionalist perspective in the scholarship also reveals a few issues—one in the area of role expectations, second in the area of role conflicts and third in limiting the potential extension of the existing roles. The concepts of management and leadership are interchanged by some authors and clearly distinguished by others. Quoting Kotter, (1996), Cheney et al. (2004) sum up the distinction quite well, “leadership produces change and management produces stability. Managers are said to ‘do things right,’ while leaders focus on ‘doing the right thing’” (p. 181). Another distinction suggested that leaders “define organizational realities and visions, whereas managers implement those visions” (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004, p. 254). Based on these distinctions, leaders drive change, and managers ensure compliance and control. The question that begs to be asked then is whether public relations/communication practitioners should strive toward a managerial role or a leadership role?

## **2.4 Rhetorical/interpretive perspective of PR roles**

An alternative lens from which to analyse public relations roles is the rhetorical and interpretive perspective. This perspective focuses on public relations practitioners' discursive and sense making activities. As previously mentioned, rhetorical studies focus on the use of symbols including text, images and actions. This perspective looks at the individual practitioner and his/her communicative abilities as persuader, advocate and meaning maker.

### 2.4.1 Public relations practitioners as persuaders

The persuasive capabilities of public relations have been its boon and its bane. Practitioners use persuasive techniques as part of their job to “engage in purposive communication” which aim to either “change or neutralize hostile opinions, crystallize latent opinions and positive attitudes, and conserve favourable opinions” (Wilcox et al., 1992, p. 240). Developing speeches is an example of persuasive activity that is part of the arsenal of the public relations practitioner (Wilcox et al., 1992). Grunig deemed that Bernays' persuasion-based model of public relations as unethical, and this view has led

public relations to be associated with the negative aspects of persuasion such as coercion and manipulation (Pfau & Wan, 2006).

Gass and Seiter (2003) present a definition of persuasion.

(P)ersuasion involves one or more persons who are engaged in the activity of creating, reinforcing, modifying, or extinguishing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, and/or behaviours within the constraints of a given communication context (p. 34).

In their model of persuasion, one of their criteria in assessing “pure” and “borderline” cases of persuasion is free will and conscious awareness (Gass & Seiter, 2003, p. 35). Persuasion can be non-coercive and every individual has the capacity to reject the persuasion, as long as they are aware that a persuasive act is occurring (Gass & Seiter, 2003, p. 28). Furthermore while not all communication has a persuasive intent, all communication has the potential to influence (Gass & Seiter, 2003).

Persuasion has also been referred to among other things as compliance gaining, influence and manipulation. One view states that “persuasion is a form of influence that predisposes, but does not impose” (Simon, 1986 cited in Gass & Seiter, 2003, p. 28). The focus on autonomy and individual will to accept or reject a certain position has also been stressed (Perloff, 1993, cited in Gass & Seiter, 2003).

Persuasion and compliance, although related, are not the same. Whereas persuasion encompasses changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations and behaviours, compliance is basically about changes in overt behaviours (Gass & Seiter, 2003, p. 236). While not all persuasive attempts by communication practitioners aim to gain compliance, it is possible that practitioners may do so indirectly—when they act on behalf of their employers/clients. When practitioners are asked to develop communication programs to support organizational values and these programs include an incentive reward scheme for example, then it is possible that the practitioners are involved in compliance gaining on behalf of the senior management.

While every individual has the option to accept or reject a persuasive act, Gass and Seiter (2003) assert that this acceptance or rejection can only occur if the individuals being persuaded are aware of the persuasive intent. Furthermore, the acceptance or rejection of the persuasive act, also known as compliance or resistance, is dependent on power relations within the organization. This relationship will be discussed later in this thesis.

Communicators as persuaders seem to be assumed as part of practitioners' roles despite a lack of clarity about the direction of the persuasive intent. It seems to be assumed that communication practitioners by virtue of being employed by the company, automatically take on the responsibility of persuading all the stakeholders on behalf of the organization. But what if the communication practitioner is one of the employees who resist the information coming from management? How can the communication practitioner address these role conflicts? One way is to clarify their role assumptions as an advocate.

#### 2.4.2 Public relations practitioners as advocates

As previously highlighted, when practitioners enact a mediator role as boundary spanners or relationship managers they experience discomfort when they are faced with conflicts of interest. According to Barney and Black (1994), this discomfort stems from the conflicting backgrounds of most public relations/communication practitioners in journalism and persuasion. On one hand, the journalistic ethic asserts objectivity, while the persuasive ethic calls for advocacy. To address this discomfort, the authors argue for an advocacy role for practitioners. The public relations practitioner as advocate explicitly declares whose interest is being served, thereby minimising instances of moral dilemmas. In explicating the advocate/adversary role for public relations practitioners which they see as similar to that of lawyers, Barney and Black (1994) however highlight that this role justifies the use of "selective truth" as opposed to "objective truth" and allows for ethical persuasion (p. 247). The authors admit that this role still has to withstand the tests of ethical behaviour, and that the practitioner's personal competency and 'sensitivity to boundaries of loyalty' are still the determining factors for its uptake.

More recently, Fitzpatrick and Bronstein (2006) explored the concept of responsible advocacy vis-à-vis ethical public relations practice. In their introductory chapter, the authors wrote, "Ethical guideposts for responsible advocacy in public relations in the twenty-first century will include individual accountability, informed decision-making, multicultural understanding, relationship building, open communication, dialogue, truth and transparency, and integrity" (Fitzpatrick & Bronstein, 2006, p. xi). However with the book's claim to demonstrate the connection between "*ethical* public relations and *effective* public relations", it reflects its location in the managerial/functionalist tradition when the authors reiterate the axiom, "good ethics is good business" (Fitzpatrick & Bronstein, 2006, p. xi). In the same book however, Wright (2006) contends that the decision to practise public relations ethically still rests with the individual practitioner, a point argued in this thesis within the context of human agency.

### 2.4.3 Meaning/sense maker

Public relations practitioners have often been called to apply their abilities to translate information on behalf of their employing clients/organizations. When they gather information as part of their environmental scanning role, they are expected to assess which bits of information will be salient to the organization to pass on to the dominant coalition. Similarly, as earlier mentioned, when practitioners ‘scout their terrain’ for issues (Heath, 2002), they try to assess the information on several levels, primarily the organizational and social levels. More and more practitioners are being asked to negotiate the meaning of the external world to the members of their organization as well as make sense of the immense amount of information confronting today’s complex organizations.

And yet, sensemaking according to Weick (1995) is not necessarily about accuracy or object perception but about “plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creations, invention, and instrumentality” (p. 57). Fiske states, “sensemaking takes a relative approach to truth, predicting that people will believe what can account for sensory experience but what is also interesting, attractive, emotionally appealing, and goal relevant” (1992, cited in Weick, 1995, p. 57). What is not however mentioned, perhaps assumed in much of the current literature, is how the individual practitioner may assess the information on a personal level. This engagement with the personal level, or how the individual communication practitioner evaluates the information based on his/her own individual values is critical to the current study. How the communication practitioner makes sense of the information is in large part a function of his/her individual values, which are informed by one’s upbringing, education and socialization (Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 195).

For example, identifying an issue may be largely influenced by how the issue affects the values of the communication practitioner. And yet, the issues management role assumes that the communication practitioner defers his/her own values in favour of the organization’s values. This leads us to another rhetorical view on roles which focuses on motives.

In her interviews with 37 lobbyists in Texas, Terry (2001) explored public relations roles using Burke’s seven offices of human motivation. Her study revealed that most of her respondents were motivated to serve, teach, defend and pontificate, entertain, govern and, cure in that order. Further, when she juxtaposed the seven motives to Broom and Smith’s original five role typology, she found that the offices of govern, teach, and defend were manager-related; and the offices of serve, pontificate and entertain were related to the technician roles (Terry, 2001, p. 252). Interestingly, the office of cure is

related to both the managerial and technical roles. Given that her study focussed on lobbyists, it would be useful to know whether these motivations extended to the public relations practitioners in this study.

The interpretive perspective emphasises the context and forces people to focus on purpose, to understand the meanings behind the symbols of word, images and actions. The use of this perspective by public relations practitioners allows them not only to create meaning for others based on their behaviours and statements, but also to gain a deeper insight into the meaning created by others (Heath, 1994, p. 10). As Heath points out, “How people enact roles on behalf of and in response to each other and their work depends on the perspectives they hold” (1994, p. 11).

Similarly, Curtin and Gaither (2005) refer to public relations practitioners as cultural intermediaries “within the sites of production and consumption to create meaning through the shaping and transfer of information” (p. 107). While public relations practitioners are indeed “discourse technologists who play a central role in the maintenance and transformation of discourse” as Motion & Leitch (1996, p. 298) described, understanding the structures and the meanings of organizational symbols is not sufficient in studying the complexity of roles in organizational value setting. An additional perspective that focuses on power, control and influence of the public relations practitioner needs to be included.

## **2.5 Critical/dialectical perspective of PR roles**

Understanding public relations roles from a critical perspective acknowledges the presence of the power dimensions on the relationships and the capabilities practitioners have in fostering change. While a rather fresh perspective for current public relations practitioners, critical approaches through the dialectical inquiry and devil’s advocate debate in strategic planning may already be practised in other parts of the organization. Furthermore, earlier conceptions of the communication practitioner as a change agent fall within the context of this perspective. More recently, critical public relations scholars have added new dimensions to the public relations role.

### 2.5.1 Public relations practitioners as change agents

The notion of change agents in the communication literature is not new. Earlier mentions of change agents for example, refer to communication/information specialists who convinced farmers about the advantages of new farming technologies (Rogers, 1983; Severin & Tankard, 1992). The third edition of Everett Rogers’ seminal book on *Diffusion of Innovations* (1983) mentions ‘consultants’, as purveyors of change through their communicative means. Based on this perspective, a change agent is defined as “an individual who influences clients’ innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency” (Rogers, 1983, p. 312). Interestingly, change agents have been described as ‘linkers’ between



the change agency and the system—a concept not too dissimilar to that of boundary spanning mentioned earlier. Furthermore, change agents are said to “possess a high degree of expertise” in the area where the change is to occur (Rogers, 1983, p. 313). Because of this seeming superiority, change agents may face problems of being marginalised and being overloaded with information.

Some of the more interesting aspects of the change agency literature in this context relate to the measure of the change agent’s success. If the client does not need the services of the change agent because the client has already adopted the change, then the agent is deemed successful. Additionally, success was also attributed to: a client-orientation, a similarity with the clients; credibility; the extent of working with opinion leaders; and, the degree to which change is compatible with clients’ needs (Rogers, 1983, p. 343).

This client centeredness reflects a more managerial/functionalist perspective. This perspective may in fact be the source of public relations/communication practitioners’ frustrations with solving problems and crises triggered by clients who may not have followed their advice, or had not included them in the process in the first place. A major shift in emphasis toward the users, the presumed beneficiaries of change, was put forward by Rogers (1978) and Rogers and Kincaid (1981).

Managers and consultants who undertake a cultural change process have claimed the roles of change agents (Morgan, 1997; Schein, 1992). Given that most organizational change literature (Kotter, 1996; Kanter et al., 1992; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Kitchen & Daly, 2002) emphasise the need for excellent communication during the change process, it seems reasonable for communication practitioners to expect to be part of the process. However it must be pointed out that the role of communication during the change process referred to managers performing an information dissemination role, instead of communication practitioners or managers as informing or even leading the process. The change literature does not clearly mention the public relations/communication practitioner as either being an actual participant in the process of deciding, planning and implementing the organizational change, or of possibly leading the change process.

This current research explores just that—what role and involvement public relations and communication practitioners have in the value change process, and through that, whether practitioners are able to instigate and perhaps drive for change within the organization.

### 2.5.2 Public relations practitioners as organizational activists

Effective organizational value change requires an understanding of the power relationships within the organization. While earlier conceptions of change agency suggest the need for similarity (homophily) between the change agent and the 'client' to maintain some stability (Severin & Tankard, 1992, p. 199), rethinking the notion of change as a constant process in organizations presents a new role for the practitioner.

Postmodern and critical public relations scholars describe this role as that of the organizational activist. Holtzhausen (2000, 2002b, with Voto, 2002) provides a refreshing postmodern view of public relations practitioners' potential to be the organizational conscience. In challenging the prevailing modernist perspective of public relations as a management function, Holtzhausen & Voto (2002) describe the role of a postmodern public relations practitioner:

The practitioner as organizational activist will serve as a conscience in the organization by resisting dominant power structures, particularly when these structures are not inclusive, will preference employees' and external publics' discourse over that of management, will make the most humane decision in a particular situation, and will promote new ways of thinking and problem solving through dissensus and conflict. (2002, p. 64).

In their interviews with 16 Florida public relations practitioners in 2000, Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) found that some practitioners exhibited more postmodern values and activist behaviours than others. They posited that these differences were due to variations in organizational environments and individual differences. Nevertheless their research findings suggested that 'postmodern' public relations practitioners possess biopower or personal power, choose sides, put employees first, practised dissensus, and are still influential despite not being a member of the dominant coalition.

Similarly, Berger (2005) argued for the inclusion of the organizational activist as the third component to add to the manager-technician typology. He claimed that in an activist role, the public relations practitioner "must go beyond advocacy of doing the right thing to carrying out actions to support and supplement advocacy in the organization and larger social system" (p. 24). He further ruminated that an activist public relations role may in fact alter power relations inside the dominant coalition and improve the perceptions of the practice among the general community (Berger, 2005, p. 25).

This view of the public relations practitioner as organizational activist is important to this study and in practice because it allows practitioners to see themselves not only as agents of change but also as 'emancipators' of marginalised groups. While the research on the organizational activist role has alluded to the possibility of gender issues (Berger, 2005), there was little mention of what individual or

organizational factors may determine the organizational activist role. While the current research is not directly about public relations as organizational activists, it builds on Holtzhausen & Voto's (2002) findings that practitioners perceived themselves as a conscience of the organization rather than the conscience of the organization.

The conception of public relations practitioners as organizational activists emphasises their potential to exercise autonomy, encourage dialogue, critical thinking and dissensus.

### 2.5.3 Public relations practitioners as organizational conscience

Several writers have alluded to the evolution of the public relations role from the technician to the manager to advocate to activist. However what has constantly prevailed over the years is a search for an ethical role, such as the organizational conscience role. Public relations scholars and practitioners alike have often proposed that public relations/communication practitioners should become the corporate conscience (Ryan & Martinson, 1983), ethical conscience (Bowen, 2002, 2004; Fitzpatrick, 1996; Grunig, 2000), public conscience (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001), organizational conscience (Holtzhausen, 2000; with Voto, 2002; Adams, 1999; Weaver-Lariscy et al., 1994). However no research has tried to examine whether practitioners are enacting their conscience role.

Practitioners such as Harold Burson, chairman of global public relations consultancy Burson-Marsteller, mentioned that one of the four roles of public relations practitioners should be that of "corporate conscience" (1987, cited in Cutlip et al., 2000). Elmer (2001) cites British management guru Charles Handy who proposed that the future role of the public relations practitioner is to be the "guardian of the corporate soul" (p. 12).

The *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Moore, 2004) defines conscience as "a moral sense of right and wrong especially as felt by a person and affecting behaviour" or "an inner feeling as to the goodness or otherwise of one's behaviour" (p. 293). In either definition there is a moral standard to which one's behaviour is measured.

Business ethics scholars Treviño and Weaver (2003, p. xv) refer to one's conscience as the 'impartial spectator' which guides and judges one's actions. This term was mentioned as a basis for an individual's sympathy within an interpersonal relationship.

What the aforementioned definitions of conscience reveal is that conscience is a moral benchmark that informs an individual how to behave and act. Conscience is informed by reason and not religion. And the determination of morality is guided by what individuals value as 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'evil'.

In public relations, the notion of the practitioner as conscience takes on the 'moral compass' approach. For example, Howard (2000) referred to the public relations counsellor as "being a champion and agent of constructive change, and giving advice on issues as complex as your CEO's responsibilities, as broad as your organization's business, as fundamental as its culture and values" (p. 10). She called on public relations practitioners to think of themselves as ombudsmen and to not only be the eyes and ears of the organization but also become its conscience as well (Howard, 2000, p. 9).

Public relations as conscience has earlier been mentioned by Linowes (1974), in *Corporate Conscience*, where he suggested that public relations practitioners promote the dual values of profit and social responsibility to top management. A socially responsible corporation has been previously linked with a public relations practitioner enacting the role of corporate conscience (Ryan & Martinson, 1983). In defining the activities of the corporate conscience, Ryan and Martinson (1983) suggested the following conditions that CEOs should provide for the corporate conscience:

- 1) The authority to collect information;
- 2) Access to meetings at which important decisions are made;
- 3) Ample opportunity to argue against policies that endanger the public welfare and for policies that enhance the public good; and most importantly;
- 4) Freedom from reprisals from managers, board members, employees, stockholders and others who don't happen to like what the corporate conscience says (Ryan & Martinson, 1983, p. 21).

Ryan and Martinson (1983) contended that the public relations practitioners who enact the corporate conscience role increase their credibility over those practitioners who merely act as corporate advocates. They argued that public relations practitioners strongly qualify as corporate conscience because of their studies in research, ethics and communication, direct dealings with various publics or stakeholders that allow them to assess the attitudes of multiple stakeholders, and their concern to act in the public interest (p. 21).

Similarly, a survey of US practitioners in the mid-eighties argued that the corporate conscience role has to do with the practitioner declaring that the public interest comes before the company's interest (Judd,

1989). Although 65% of the respondents indicated that responsibility to society was more important than one's responsibility to the employer or client (Judd, 1989), the study reported what practitioners believed they should be doing, not necessarily what they were doing.

Adams (1999) called on practitioners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to become the conscience of their organizations by leading them to do 'the right thing'. He challenged practitioners to start by assessing their own values and becoming agents for change not only by identifying what needs to be changed but also by proposing solutions for the change. Bowen (2001), on the other hand, argued that by using an ethical decision making model for issues management, practitioners can become the ethical conscience of the organization. More recently, in a IABC Research Foundation study that included 1827 surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews from practitioners from North America, Israel, Australia and New Zealand, Bowen and Heath (2006) identified two ethical roles namely, the conscience counsellor, and the core values manager. The conscience counsellor "sets and clarifies the expectations of ethical behavior and provides ethical analysis to management" and the core values manager "identifies the values of the organization, deals with values-related ethical issues, and perpetuates the reputation and values of the organization" (Bowen & Heath, 2006, p. 35). Furthermore, they conclude that the conscience role requires ethical training for practitioners as well as an understanding that ethical standards in public communication should exist and that communication professional should follow those standards.

While many scholars have proposed that public relations practitioners **should** enact the organizational conscience role, not very many have identified **how**. They seem to assume that the current conceptions of public relations practitioners' roles are sufficient to convince others that they can enact the role. As Bowen and Heath's (2006) recent study reveals, that is not the case. This current study furthers this point and looks at the practitioner's involvement in organizational value setting to determine whether they enact the conscience role. Thus it is important to draw from role theory's concept of expectations to ask practitioners whether they (1) enact the conscience role; if not, whether they should enact the conscience role; and (2), what is involved in enacting the conscience role. Furthermore, it is also important to find out whether they think management perceives them in this role.

#### 2.5.4 Public relations practitioners as agents

The notion of the practitioner as "agent" has been assumed in most instances especially where public relations practitioners are referred to as consultants in an agency such as Hill and Knowlton, or Burson-Marsteller or as "agents" of the private and public sector companies that employ them. The consultant role has been synonymous to the agent role following the advertising agency/public relations agency

model. While consultant roles usually belonged exclusively to agency/consultancy operations, some Australian organizations have in fact reconfigured their in-house roles to provide “consulting” services to their various organizational business units (Lennon, 2003).

But the above references to agency reflect a fairly narrow perspective. In discussing Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest that the ‘governed’ which could refer to public relations/communication practitioners, could be complicit in ‘reproducing structures’ which are against their interests or not even of their own making (p. 50). This implies that cultural members, which in this case may be the employees including communication practitioners, make choices, sometimes unaware that the choices have been made for them. But Gramsci’s views also imply that they are “exercising agency in making choices and sometimes even as resisting cultural authority” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 50). This point about the exercise of making choices is critical to the discussion in the latter parts of this thesis, particularly because it contradicts the traditional notions about agency.

For example, when public relations/communication practitioners are employed as consultants, they are expected to act on behalf of and in the best interests of their client/organization. For internal consultants, the same principle applies because the internal consultancy operates on a pay for service model. In effect, the client or the customer who pays for the service is entitled to demand the expected service or product as part of the transactional exchange (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985, p. 186) The question emerges when the client demand or expectation runs counter to the best advice of the agent/consultant. In this agent paradigm, most of the questions on conflicts of interest arise particularly on whose interests should be given priority—the client/organization, the public/society, the individual, or the profession?

Other interpretations of public relations agency have been mentioned in public relations literature. For example, Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) identified the press agency model as one of the four models of public relations practice. According to their description, this model typifies a practitioner whose goal is to maximise publicity and generate media coverage for its client/organization through whatever means, including creating pseudo-events (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The Excellence Study revealed that this one-way communication model was practised by both least excellent and most excellent organizations albeit in limited ways (Dozier, 1995, p. 209).

In other literature the notion of public relations practitioner as agent is made synonymous with that of advocate. For example, several scholars (Barney & Black, 1994; Bivins, 1989, 1993; Fitzpatrick &

Gauthier, 2001; Lieber, 2005), in exploring the role of public relations practitioners in the context of ethics and professionalism, compared public relations practitioners with legal practitioners or lawyers who act on behalf of their clients. Following their reasoning, acting as an advocate for a cause, organization or individual, regardless of one's guilt or innocence, reflects one's ethical responsibilities as a professional practitioner.

For the same reason, communication practitioners acting on behalf of their clients have generated their reputation as 'hired guns' (Stauber & Rampton, 1995). The nature of consultancy work implies that clients approach agencies for their generalist or specialist communication expertise. While many organizations have now realised the importance of communication as integral to the business strategy, many organizations in the past have employed consultancies for their crisis expertise, usually while in the midst of a crisis. Therefore the expectation was for public relations practitioners to "fight the fires"—situations that have not helped the cause of public relations as a profession. In some cases, the practitioner's previously good reputation may be sullied by his/her client's reputation. As such, some consultancies choose their clients carefully. For example, Melbourne-based consultancy, Royce Communications (<http://www.royce.com.au/aboutUs/>) states publicly on their website, "We only work for clients we like. The chemistry must be right."

The 'agency' role profile Toth, Serini, Wright and Emig (1998) added to the manager-technician dichotomy described a role akin to Broom & Smith's (1979, cited in Cutlip et al., 2000) expert prescriber role. However, other than distinguishing activities between men and women enacting the "agency profile" role, the authors unfortunately did not elaborate further on their concept of agency.

When the notion of agency is construed as acting on behalf of someone, it raises questions of identity, interest and motives. For example, when public relations/communication practitioners act on behalf of their client or employing organization, it is assumed that they also embody their client's/organization's persona which includes their values. Clearly these assumptions have not been tested although several articles have been written about the importance of aligning individual values with organizational values (see for example, Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2002) What if the practitioner does not hold the same values and principles as his/her employing organization? In the first place, would the practitioner even consider working for that company? Does it mean that the practitioner cannot represent his/her client/organization with integrity? Does this mean that the practitioner is not acting in a professional manner? Some practitioners have responded by adopting the advocate framework. But more importantly, does an agency view assume a submersion of one's identity?

Furthermore, the conception of agency as acting on behalf of someone contributes to role conflicts among public relations/communication practitioners. Because the practitioner enacts multiple roles, not just a primary and a secondary role, the agency context seems to assume that the practitioner is not acting on his/her own behalf or on behalf of his/her own beliefs but someone else's, usually the employing client/organization.

Moreover, when practitioners enact their roles on behalf of others, does it assume that the client/organization's interest should be served? In a client/consultancy relationship, the clients' interest seems to come first (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 27). Although it can be argued that consultants, unlike in-house practitioners, tend to be more blunt and forthcoming in their assessments and recommendations because they do not feel beholden to their clients. But what happens when ethical issues arise? Competing individual, professional, organizational, and public interests will surface, and determining whose interest is prioritized at that time can uncover the predominant ideology of the organization and the individuals within it. While this research is not directly about ethical dilemmas faced by practitioners, it asks who are involved in environmental scanning, how are the findings of that scanning prioritized, and by whom?

Many US practitioners who felt a strong need to view the role of public relations in society have expressed the need to rethink public relations roles (in *Tactics*, 2001, p. 19). One of the questions emerging from this study is whether the functionalist or modernist definition of agency leads to the ethical dilemmas and role conflicts experienced by public relations and communication practitioners.

Postmodern scholars have critiqued the traditional interpretation of organizational agents, particularly as people who present knowledge as objective on behalf of the organization's management. Postmodernist public relations scholar Holtzhausen (2002, p. 257) lamented that public relations practitioners become the "stooges of powerful corporate managers" when asked to be agents towards normative compliance and discipline through corporate ideology. She argued that the modernist conception of public relations agency is primarily aimed at achieving consensus and meeting the needs of 'managers' for accumulating wealth and power (p. 257). Furthermore, modernist public relations practitioners become agents who establish and perpetuate the corporate ideology through disseminating organization's "rules, practices and norms" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 257). However Holtzhausen (2002) also contended that an opportunity exists for the postmodern public relations practitioner agent by becoming a "location for the throughput of discourse" where the process is achieved through conflict



and dissensus where new knowledge may or may not be achieved (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 257). A postmodern view of public relations agency incorporates a process where the public relation/communication practitioner encourages and leads the discussion of various viewpoints rather than the exclusive views of the powerful management for which they work (Holtzhausen, 2002). Public relations becomes a process where practitioners “actively encourage differing and opposing views” to assist the generation of various forms of meaning rather than mere facilitators of organization control (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 257). However, this role is a challenge to practitioners to take up the ‘cause’ because if they do not view their role as a “process of encouraging differing and opposing views”, then they will continue to be pawns of the organization’s control mechanism (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 257).

This notion of choice by the agent relates to rhetorical scholar Kenneth Burke’s reference to the agent’s character. In discussing his dramatist pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose), Burke (1969) described the notion of agent not only as *what* person but what *kind* of person, which implies that a person’s characteristics and attributes are important to being an agent. He also posed the possibility of the agent acting on behalf of himself or herself in his discussion of the medium.

One usually thinks of a medium as something in which an agent acts (scene) or something which an agent uses (agency). But what if we equated it with the very nature of the agent itself? (Burke, 1969, p. 187)

When thinking about the public relations/communication practitioner as an agent who has the choice to exercise his/her personal will, questions arise whether choice is possible only for more senior practitioners whose credibility and expertise are already well recognised in the organization and perhaps the industry. Inevitably, these questions lead to moral maturity and its relationship with personal identity. In her discussion of the debates about agency and structure in social theory, Archer (2000) differentiates that self and person constitute one’s personal identity, and agent and actor refer to one’s social identity. In a way, her ideas conform with Burke’s framework where the agent belongs to part of a system or scene or act. However she argues that agency and actors, as elements of social identity, emerge upon the individual’s maturity and exposure to social experiences and practice. And that personal identity—*who you are*—is bigger than social identity—*who you say you are* (Archer, 2000).

These distinctions are useful in discussing the public relations/communication practitioner especially in the context of personal or individual values vis-à-vis professional and organizational values.

From this discussion, public relations/communication practitioners could enact three versions of the agency role. The first version is when he or she enacts on behalf of an organization or individual with which he or she has a relationship (usually employment). The second version is when the practitioner acts on behalf of himself or herself as an individual. The third version is when the practitioner acts on behalf of the 'public' or of the marginal or less dominant groups. Given the differences in orientations, it is useful to distinguish the different agency roles that emerge from this research.

To summarize, the critical and dialectical perspective on public relations roles demonstrates how practitioners possess the ability to engender change through their understanding of the power relationships within their organizations. Furthermore, the critical/dialectical perspective views the importance of dialogue, diversity and dissensus as the practitioner enacts an agency role as a step to becoming the organizational conscience.

## **2.6 Factors determining public relations roles**

In exploring what roles public relations and communication practitioners enact in organizational value setting, the previous sections have asked whether one's predominant managerial/functionalist perspective impacts on one's role enactment and whether a change in the predominant view is required to maximise the leadership and conscience potential of the public relations and communication role.

In addition to a point of view, there may be other individual and organizational factors that affect practitioners' enactment of roles. This section looks at the individual and organizational factors that have been found to affect role enactment.

### 2.6.1 Individual factors

Several role studies have explored what determines the enactment of a managerial or a technician role. The Excellence Study examined individual characteristics such as gender, age, education and professional activities (L Grunig, et al., 2002; Dozier, et al., 1995). Gender was found to be correlated with the manager-technician roles (Dozier, et al., 1995; L Grunig, et al., 2002; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Creedon, 1991; Dozier & Broom, 1995), and with later research on transformational leadership roles (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Furthermore, females tended to be middle managers rather than top managers (L Grunig, et al., 2002), and likely to perform both managerial and technical tasks (Dozier, et al., 1995; L Grunig et al., 2001). Age however was not found to be a factor that determined the enactment of the communication manager, senior adviser or media relations roles. Younger practitioners performed the communication technician role more often than their older counterparts; and females who held the most

senior communication role tended to be younger than the males in similar positions (Dozier, et al., 1995). Weaver-Lariscy, Cameron and Sweep (1998) found female practitioners were more likely to enact an organizational conscience role while male practitioners were more like to enact a 'dominant insider' role. In particular, the female respondents perceived themselves to discuss social responsibility issues while male respondents perceived themselves as being able to express dissent and argue within the decision-making circle (Weaver-Lariscy et al., 1998, p. 137). While gender issues are not the focus of the current study, these findings provide significant implications to practitioners' role orientations.

While the Excellence Study did not find education to influence the enactment of managerial or technical roles (Dozier, et al., 1995), earlier studies found otherwise (Lindenmann & Lapetina, 1981; Lauzen, 1992). In particular, the studies pointed out that the practitioners' educational background was too specialised and narrow, and lacked business courses which were seen to help practitioners move up the corporate ladder (Lauzen, 1992, p. 65). This reason supports Dozier and Broom's (2006) explanation that formal university education "favors technical competencies" required for entry-level work in public relations (p. 152) and rather than ethical practice (L'Etang, 2003).

While involvement in professional activities were not found to influence the type of role enacted by the practitioner (Dozier & Broom, 1995), other scholars cautioned on measuring professional experience based on how many years experience the practitioner has had. Instead Toth et al. (1998) suggested that experience should also indicate the actual tasks undertaken by managers and technicians. They argued that the number of years of professional experience may not provide a clear understanding of which role was more predominant than the other especially for female practitioners who as mentioned earlier tend to enact both manager and technician roles simultaneously. In Dozier and Broom's (2006) most recent discussion on roles research, they suggested that professional experience "contributes directly to manager role expertise" which eventually contributes to manager role enactment (p. 151).

Personality has been suggested as a factor in people enacting particular roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966); and choosing their workplaces (Tom, 1971, cited in Schneider, 1987, p. 441). Very little research (Fenner, 2004) has been made about how an individual's personality traits or attributes determine the enactment of a communication manager or communication technician role, although some (Creedon, 1991; Toth et al., 1998; Weaver-Lariscy et al., 1994) have implied these in describing gender differences among practitioners.

Based on the above research, can these individual attributes determine whether a practitioner enacts a value-setting role? Corollary to this, is value setting considered a task within the realm of managers, technicians or leaders? Are there other individual attributes that may determine one's enactment of the conscience role?

### 2.6.2 Organizational factors

In addition to individual factors, scholars have also examined whether organizational factors determine role enactment. Organizational factors such as the organizational environment, organizational culture, size, stage in the life cycle, and the organization's definition of public relations have been explored.

For example, in organizational environments which are complex, unstable, threatening or both, practitioners are more likely to enact the manager role in organizations and where the environment is stable and non-threatening, practitioners are more likely to enact the technician role in organizations (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Dozier, 1992; Acharya, 1983, cited in L Grunig, et al., 2002).

When a system is relatively closed, the role of practitioners and the structure of the public relations unit reflect historical preferences of the dominant coalition. If we were to apply this notion to the role of public relations not in terms of its organizational environment but its maturity, this will be supported (Dozier, 1992, p 344).

Similarly, organizational environment, along with individual differences, was also identified as a factor which allowed practitioners to exhibit organizational activist behaviors (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 76).

What the public relations literature however does not distinguish quite clearly is the difference between internal and external environments. For this study, the nature of the organizational environment will be described based on whether the organization had undergone or is undergoing a change process. Following Dozier's (1992) suggestion, does it mean that organizations which are undergoing change or have recently undergone change are likely to have practitioners enacting the conscience role? Or could practitioners representing organizations from certain industry sectors more likely to enact the organizational conscience role because of the environmental pressures the industries are in?

Another factor suggested to affect role enactment is organizational culture. Because organizational values have been described as key components of organizational culture, it seems reasonable to examine whether organizational culture determines the enactment of practitioner roles. Most public relations roles research however seemed to relate the type of organizational systems (open vs closed) rather than organizational culture to organizational roles (see Broom, 1986; Broom & Dozier, 1990).

With the Excellence Study identifying that participative organizational culture is an essential factor in communication excellence along with core knowledge and shared expectations, it could be argued that participative cultures are likely to encourage practitioners to be involved in organizational value-setting activities.

A more recent study found organizational culture as a factor which determines ethical decision making among issue managers (Bowen, 2004). She found in her case study of a pharmaceutical company that a participative culture where employees were able to provide input had issues managers who tended to practise ethical decision making. Interestingly however, she also describes the culture as a “strong organizational culture that emphasizes the importance of ethics” (Bowen, 2004, p. 321).

The use of the term, ‘strong’ to describe the organizational culture is particularly curious especially when juxtaposed to earlier descriptions of ‘strong cultures’. A strong culture “is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time; and enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 15-16) What this suggests is that strong cultures encourage employees to behave in a particular way based on an unwritten code of behaviour, and that behaving in similar ways allows them to become more productive.

Following this reasoning, is it possible that a participative organizational culture is likely to encourage the public relations/communication practitioner to enact an organizational conscience role? Will an open and more participative culture allow the practitioner to get involved in the value-setting process?

Another factor that impacts on public relations roles is how the organization defines the public relations and/or communication function. Arguably, the kind of organizational culture also impacts on how the public relations and communication function is defined within the organization. The view that authoritative cultures tend to be more traditional and centralized in its decision-making processes (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 140) suggests that a traditional definition or perspective of public relations and communication will affect the type of role the practitioners enact or expected to enact.

In particular, how the dominant coalition defines and views the public relations function is critical to the types of role enactment. The Excellence Study suggested that when communication practitioners have a relationship with the dominant coalition, they exercise some power and influence and this

relationship is somewhat defined by how the dominant coalitions value and support communication (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 73).

When CEOs were asked what activities they thought the public relations/communication department should do, they expected practitioners to enact varied roles such as technician, manager, media relations, senior media manager and representative roles (L Grunig, et al., 2002, pp. 241-248). Moreover, CEOs expected practitioners to enact both managerial and technician roles. What this means is that public relations and communications managers are seen as valuable by the dominant coalition for their technical expertise but technical expertise is of not much value if not combined with managerial expertise (L Grunig, et al., 2002, p. 255). Recent interviews with British CEOs supported this view that public relations practitioners assist CEOs with reputation but more in terms of monitoring and developing profile (Murray & White, 2005, p. 352). The study also revealed that the public relations/corporate communication role is valued by organizational leaders and that their influence to change organizational behaviour is acknowledged.

Assessing how the dominant coalition valued public relations/communication practitioners is important for practitioners to understand others' expectations of their roles. In the same manner, it is important to know how the practitioners think they are perceived by their CEOs and dominant coalitions. Aside from the Excellence Study, only one other study has included the Perception of Value index exploring the effects of gender and power on public relations managers' upward influence (O'Neil, 2004). This index is being used in this study to know whether the way practitioners' think their CEOs and dominant coalition value their role relates to their enactment of the organizational conscience role.

Other organizational factors such as organizational size (number of employees), communication department size (number of employees in the department) have been found not to affect whether practitioners enact a managerial or technician role (Dozier, et al., 1995). However smaller communication departments tend to see their top communicators engaging in media relations and technician roles basically because of the limited number of people to delegate those tasks to. Other factors such as the organization's stage in the life cycle or the individual practitioner's personality do not seem to have been examined in prior research.

To summarize, this section shows that certain individual and organizational factors influence the type of roles public relations and communication practitioners enact. While the existing research is useful in establishing this relationship, it however limits the examination towards the manager-technician

typology, or its extended versions. Very little research has explored the factors that determine whether the practitioners can enact an organizational value setting or organizational conscience role. More recent research on public relations practitioners in ethical decision making (Bowen, 2004) and as organizational activists (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) suggest organizational culture and environment may determine the practitioners' enactment of organizational conscience role. Although implying that individual attributes also determine the enactment of the conscience role, these were not fully explored. To further explore the conscience role, it is appropriate to examine one of the key activities associated with the role, that of setting organizational values.

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter examined existing public relations roles research using multiple perspectives. In doing so, it showed that dominant managerial/functionalist perspective has constrained the extension of new conceptions of public relations roles. Adding the rhetorical and critical perspectives to roles research presents new ways of conceptualising public relations roles particularly using the notion of agency. While the managerial/functionalist perspective has been necessary for the public relations field to establish itself in the business community over the last 30 to 40 years, it is not sufficient for the current complexity of organizations operating in a globally diverse, increasingly transparent and ethically demanding environment.

Moreover, the existing research has been dominated by studies on American practitioners. While some international studies have included Australian practitioners as respondents, no roles research has focused solely on Australian practitioners. Another question that this review reveals is whether the predominance of the managerial/functionalist perspective in public relations roles research has in fact constrained the ability of public relations practitioners to exercise conscience roles. Because they are socialised through education and organizational learning to practise either a managerial or technical role, practitioners' perceptions of their roles are guided by their self-expectations.

Furthermore, in examining public relations roles through multiple perspectives, it seems to reveal that organizational conscience and ethical aspects of the role are a common concern. While previous research on the conscience role have largely been aspirational, none have actually explored how public relations practitioners' involvement in organizational value setting may be related to the organizational conscience role. This research addresses these gaps.

## CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE SETTING

*Evaluation is creation: hear it, you creators!  
Evaluating is itself the most valuable treasure of all that we value.  
It is only through evaluation that value exists:  
and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow.  
Hear it, you creators!  
--Friedrich Nietzsche*

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter's examination of public relations roles using multiple perspectives approach presents the limitations of singular perspectives and gaps in the current explication of public relations roles in general, and the conscience role in particular. This chapter will now examine the organizational conscience role by focusing on a key activity, that is the setting of organizational values. As previously mentioned, if individual conscience is informed by a person's values—knowing what is right and wrong--then it could be argued that an organization's conscience is informed by an organization's values. If public relations and communication practitioners were to enact the organizational conscience role, then does it follow that their personal values inform them? If not, whose values inform the organization's values? Further how are organizational values developed?

To understand how public relations and communication practitioners may be involved in the involved in the value-setting process, it is necessary to understand how organizational values relate to organizational culture and strategic planning and how modern organizations use values for organizational effectiveness and within the context of leadership. Furthermore, it is useful to know how individual values relate to organizational values development.

The first section of this chapter will look at the origins of organizational values vis-à-vis individual values and how they relate to organizational culture. The next section discusses how organizational values are developed and what processes are involved. The third section will present alternative views about organizational values and the final section will discuss how organizational values present a platform for leadership.



## **3.2 Organizational values: heart of organizational culture**

### 3.2.1 Defining organizational values

Values have been defined in different ways in the social psychology and organizational literature. While it is useful to distinguish individual values from organizational values, most of the communication and organizational literature (for example Kruckeberg in Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Maierhofer et al., 2003; Brown & Treviño, 2003; Kabanoff & Daly, 2002; Murphy & Davey, 2002) still cite the definition provided by social psychologist Milton Rokeach of individual value as: "... an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state existence" (Rokeach, 1972, p. 160).

Once internalised, the value becomes either a conscious or unconscious guide to how one acts, develops and maintains an attitude, justifies own and others' actions, morally judges oneself and others and compares with others (Rokeach, 1972, p. 160). Another view suggests that values characterize social systems in the same manner as roles and norms do (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 37). From this perspective, social systems are composed of roles (behaviours of the members), norms (prescriptions and sanctions for these behaviours) and values (where the norms are embedded). This view posits that norms and values integrate rather than differentiate social systems, and that is why organizations have been accused of using organizational values as a means of control (Barker, 1993, 1999; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985).

Organizational values have been described as emerging from individual values which will be discussed in the next section. However a recent view distinguished between individual, group and organizational values. Australian scholars Maeirhofer, Rafferty and Kabanoff (2003) argued that the importance accrued to individual, group and organization values varies according to stages in which those values are acquired, maintained or changed. For example, they described how individual values are more likely to be influenced by organizational socialization processes upon the individual's entry into the workplace, how values influence behaviour to maintain consistency and stability for the individual, and how individual values inform one's reaction to change. Group values are viewed to be important at the acquisition stage because similarity of values frame the basis of group formation, and because they enhance performance at the maintenance stage. Group values at the change stage however requires incorporating innovative and experimental content to assist value congruence that will assist in effecting organizational value change. Similarly, organizational values are deemed influential at its

formation because they become embedded in the organization and become difficult to change. However when organizational values do change, the attractiveness of the proposed set of values compared with the old set of values as well as the organization's culture determine their importance (Maierhofer et al., 2003).

While organizational values have been described to be either symbolic--“transcendental, moral, or sacred values”, they also need to be functional--“pragmatic values associated with functional outcomes” (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 54). Organizational values that are both symbolic and functional make them more relevant and meaningful to employees.

From a cultural perspective, values, in particular espoused values, are defined as the second component of organizational culture, along with basic assumptions and artefacts (Schein, 1992). Espoused values are the “articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve” (Schein, 1992, p. 9) while basic assumptions are similar to “theories in use” or values in use (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Because espoused values include beliefs and moral and ethical rules articulated within the organization especially during decision-making or times when uncertainty needs to be reduced, they become indicative of how individuals will behave (Schein, 1992, p. 20). Alignment of espoused values with actual values, also referred to as value congruence, receive much attention in the organizational communication context because of the need for communication practitioners to establish credibility and minimize skepticism and resistance in the workplace. Furthermore, value congruence is also associated with strong cultures, which are assumed to lead to organizational productivity and effectiveness (Cheney et al., 2004, p. 87). Communication practitioners charged with communicating and espousing organizational values face credibility dilemmas when their organizations do not practise what they preach. Situations like these lead to questions about how much control and influence do communication practitioners have to ensure that espoused values and actual values are aligned.

The functionalist perspective of organizational values emerges when management writers assert that organizational values guide organizational behaviour. Management consultants Henderson and Thompson (2003), for example, define values as the “sum of our preferences and priorities” where they describe preferences as something we would rather have than not and priorities indicated the importance of one preference over another (p. 15). They posit that values create focus and enable individuals to understand the underlying motivations, beliefs and assumptions (Henderson & Thompson, 2003, pp. 15-16).

Another functional approach to organizational values describes them in terms of orientations--future orientation, success orientation, cost benefit orientation, production orientation, and competition orientation (Rieke & Sillars, cited in Seeger, 1997). According to Seeger (1997), these values apply to both internal and external activities of the organization: "Cultural values represent a particular organization's unique adaptation to contingencies and opportunities and help clarify the shoulds and oughts of organizational life for members" (p. 5).

However, management writers Collins and Porras' (1997) definition of organizational values differentiates them from operational guidelines or policies which can be adjusted as required: "The organization's essential and enduring tenets—a small set of general guiding principles; not to be confused with specific cultural or operating practices; not to be compromised for financial gain or short-term expediency" (Collins & Porras, 1997, p. 73).

In effect, organizational values must be symbolic enough to reflect the moral and ethical flavor gained from its corporate history and persona acceptable in the organization and yet practical enough for employees to understand how those statements translate into everyday, practical behavior. These statements and behaviors comprise the culture of the organization.

### 3.2.2 Organizational values and organizational culture

Organizational values have been described as the heart, the DNA, of organizational culture (Henderson & Thompson, 2003). Many scholars and writers on organizational culture mention organizational values as a key component of organizational culture (Schein, 1992; Morgan, 1997; Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Stohl, 2001; McAleese & Hargie, 2004). McAleese and Hargie (2004) have summarised the numerous attempts to define organizational culture and they concluded that how organizational culture is defined depends on the author's perspective. Organizational culture has been defined from the narrow (the way we do things here; or simply as values and beliefs) to being a process (construction of social reality) and, to the other extreme, that organizations are cultures (cultures are not what organizations have but what they are).

Because organizational culture means different things to different people (McAleese & Hargie, 2004; Eisenberg & Riley, 2001, key descriptions of organizational culture are necessary.

Corporate cultures have been described as ‘strong’ if management is able to integrate and control employees’ values, and ‘weak’ if not (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Consequently, companies with strong cultures were deemed ‘excellent’, more effective and more successful (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This view of culture as something an organization has which it controls to achieve organizational objectives is described as a functional perspective (Cheney, et al., 2004, pp. 87-88).

Organizational culture has also been described as either ‘participative’ or ‘authoritarian’. In the Excellence Study, organizational culture was defined as “the sum total of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that organize and integrate a group of people who work together” (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 135). Using a 45-item questionnaire, the Excellence Study team asked 4600 employees in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States how they described their organizational culture and found “two patterns of values, symbols, meanings, or beliefs in the organizations”—participative and authoritarian. Participative cultures were described to strongly feature teamwork, shared decision-making, interdepartmental coordination, and employees caring for each other. Authoritarian cultures, on the other hand, were characterised by centralized control and decision making, clear hierarchical distinctions, and generally closed to input from outside sources.

Organizational culture has also been described from the symbolist or interpretive perspective (Cheney et al., 2004). This perspective argues that organizations *are* cultures, and as such organizations comprise “a mosaic of organizational realities rather than a uniform corporate culture” (Morgan, 1997, p. 137). While advocating the benefits of using the cultural metaphor in studying organizations especially during organizational change, Morgan (1997) also warns of the risk of using culture as a manipulative tool (p. 151) through the participative processes undertaken by organizations. Because of the complexity of processes and structures in organizations, constructing meaning and realities for its employees become necessary for stability. The realities that are constructed make up the organizational culture, which can comprise diverse and plural meanings. However, to minimise the uncertainty and confusion by employees, many organizations strive for a ‘strong’ and sometimes ‘unitary’ culture. Because of this drive towards strong cultures, as purported by Deal and Kennedy (1982), Morgan (1997) believes many managers and consultants, including communication practitioners, have adopted roles as change agents. While managers feel that their new roles will be for the ‘good’ of the company, critics suggest this is dangerous because of the risk of ‘ideological control’ or ‘values engineering’ (Morgan, 1997, p. 150).

To address this risk, Morgan (1997) contends that while it is important to study the meanings underlying texts, words and other symbols as part of studying organizational culture, it must also be recognized that these are merely fragments of a greater and more complex experience. In fact he asserts that managers may influence the experiences of their employees by being aware of the symbolic consequences of their actions, but they cannot control culture as often advocated by management writers. Furthermore, he also affirms the importance of individuals enacting their own roles: “This view can be important in empowering people to take greater responsibility for their world by recognizing that they play an important part in the construction of their realities” (Morgan, 1997, p. 152).

Similarly Stohl (2001) shares the view that culture is not a thing that can be managed, controlled or contained (p. 366), but is instead cultivated. She acknowledges that trying to influence, gain compliance, and make decisions becomes more complex in a world of multiple and conflicting identities in the workplace. The existence of multiple formal and informal sub-cultures within the organizational culture is a reality that needs to be acknowledged. Furthermore, diverse workplaces where employees come from various cultural backgrounds also account for the complexity in the workplace.

Management scholar Charles Handy (1999) affirms the view that organizational culture could be a means of control and influence. He believes that the increase in organizational culture literature is due to the realization that “customs and traditions of a place are a powerful way of influencing behaviour [ecologically] (p. 183).”

Strong pervasive cultures turn organizations into cohesive tribes with distinctly clannish feelings. The values and traditions of the tribe are reinforced by its private language, its catch-phrases and its tales of past heroes and dramas. The way of life is enshrined in rituals so that rule books and manual are almost unnecessary; custom and tradition provide the answers....Experience suggests that a strong culture makes a strong organization, but does it matter what sort of culture is involved? (Handy, 1999, p. 183).

Nevertheless he puts forward four types of organizational culture following earlier work by Harrison (1972, cited in Handy, 1999) namely: power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture. The *power culture* describes a small organization which depends on a central power source who usually chooses a select few to act on his or her behalf. Being a small operation, there are hardly any rules and people move and act quickly but influence is dictated by the strength of the ties to the central power source. *Role cultures* reflect organizations where power is defined by one’s position and influence is gained from rules and procedures. Existing in stable and predictable environments, this kind of culture is slow to change. As this current study focuses on roles, it is useful to examine whether the

respondents' organizations reflected this type of culture especially as the Australian economy had experienced a stable economy and government since 1998.

The *task culture* is found in organizations which have a matrix structure where employees may be dispersed structurally or even geographically and focus on the expertise they can contribute to the task or the project. Although this type of culture allows for flexibility and quick response, control and influence are problematic as groups are disbanded when the project is completed. The *person culture* refers to organizations where individuals with similar interests and equal power co-exist such as consultancies. Because each individual has different goals, this type of culture is difficult to influence and control.

To summarize, organizational values remain an important component of organizational culture. While there has been a lot of research on organizational culture, not a lot of research has examined whether organizational culture affects the way organizational values are developed, and specifically, who, other than the founder and CEO, are involved in the process? Or whether the value-setting process defines the organizational culture? For example, does a more participative culture mean that employees are involved in the value-setting process? And equally, does an authoritative culture mean that organizational values come from the founders or its subsequent leaders? The next section explores whether organizational values emerge from the organizational founders, the dominant coalition, the employees, or all of the above.

### **3.3 Values development and construction**

While much has been written about organizational values and organizational culture, literature on how organizations actually develop their values is pretty scant. Value setting has been described based on its rigidity or how quickly one's values can shift (Griseri, 1998, p. 144). Evolutionary value setting occurs when individuals readily change and adapt their values with not much concern, while revolutionary value setting occurs when individuals holding their values dearly reluctantly change after being cajoled and provided justification for the change (Griseri, 1998). When values emerge from and are influenced by individuals' attitudes and beliefs, they are described as 'composed' and when they are dictated by their attitudes and beliefs, they are 'imposed' (Griseri, 1998).

There are different schools of thought on how organizational values are developed and established, and who is involved in the process. Furthermore, the process seems to depend on several factors including the organizational culture and the organization's stage in the life cycle.

The first school suggests that organizational values are developed and established by the founders of new companies, and by the leaders or CEOs of more mature companies. While Schein (1992) identified three sources of culture as the founders, the group members, and the new members and leaders, he emphasised that the “most important for cultural beginnings is the impact of founders” (p. 211). Founders, he argued, set the context in which the organization will operate and these include the values and the choice of group members. As founders have a high level of self-confidence and determination, they are “comfortable in imposing those views on their partners and employees” during the early stages of the organization (Schein, 1992, p. 213).

Similarly, Morley and Shockley-Zalabak’s (1991) study supported this view that founders define organizational values. In their earlier work, they found that employees enter their workplaces with their personal value systems. The personal values common with other organizational members are then communicated through ‘thematic rules’ which guide their behaviour and, when aligned with the organizational values, predict employee satisfaction (Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1989, cited in Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1991). They then extended their study to founders, primarily to ascertain whether the founders’ values were similar with the organizational members. Their interviews and written surveys with managers, employees and founders revealed that founders brought their personal and cultural values to the organizations they create and that employees perceived the founders’ values as the bases of the organizational rules. This personal value system identified ‘the way it should be’ and ‘the way it should not be’ (Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 445). Furthermore, it was observed that founders demonstrated the rules by modelling—working long hours, getting involved in technical problems and supporting a friendly work environment (Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 445). While their study was significant in establishing that founders set organizational values for new organizations, it does not extend the study to more mature organizations.

As more people join the organization, does the strength of the founders’ values become diluted? Do the founders’ values live on through the organizational culture? Or do the values change with a change in leadership?

Schein (1992) contends that while organizational cultures come from founders, managers can also be involved in culture change if they focus on the primary embedding mechanisms, namely, paying attention to measure and control; reacting to organizational crises; observing criteria for resource allocation; deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching; observed criteria in allocating rewards and status; and, observed criteria in recruiting, selecting, promoting, retiring and excommunication

organizational members (p. 231). Organizational values, which fall under Schein's (1992) secondary embedding mechanisms at the organization's growth stage, are likely to become primary mechanisms at the organization's mature stage. Schein (1992) posits that when managers get involved in changing values and culture, they become leaders (p. 253).

These ideas resonate with McDonald and Ganz (1992) who suggest that in addition to the philosophical legacy of the founders, values are also developed from the personal beliefs of the current dominant coalition particularly those of the CEO, learning events from the organization's history, and industry affiliations. In interviews with senior executives and management consultants specialising in executive selection, questions about the significance and strategies of shared values were asked (McDonald & Gandz, 1992). The study revealed how 32 organizations ended up being classified in two groups—the 'make values' and the 'buy values' groups. The 'make values' organizations selected employees based on how willing they were to learn and adopt the organization's values rather than their personal work values. The 'buy values' organizations selected employees based on their skills and existing personal work related values and do not recruit employees based on their ability to socialize towards the organization's specific set of values (McDonald & Gandz, 1992, pp. 71-72.)

The other school of thought suggests that employees are involved in organizational value setting. This view is framed within the moral development stages developed by social psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. Proponents of this view believe that employees as individuals develop their values through a series of stages (Griseri, 1998).

### 3.3.1 Development of individual values

Kohlberg (1981) describes six stages by which individuals develop their values, which conform to three levels, are described below:

#### ***Level 1: Pre-conventional***

**Stage 1 Legalistic**—the individual obeys rules to avoid sanction

**Stage 2 Individualistic**—the individual obeys rules in order to maximise their own interests, but may recognise that others do the same

#### ***Level 2: Conventional***

**Stage 3 Mutual expectations-** the individual tries to maintain good relationships with those close to him/her.

**Stage 4 Social conscience-** the individual feels that social norms are right and seeks to promote these.

#### ***Level 3: Post-conventional***



**Stage 5 Social contract-** the individual recognises that social norms themselves need to be evaluated, for example in terms of how just they are.

**Stage 6 Universal** – the individual regards general principles such as human rights as overriding moral imperatives.

Kohlberg's (1981) framework posits that individuals undergo different stages of moral development although it does not imply that moral development is a function of an individual's maturity. This means that a younger practitioner can still be at a stage 4 or social conscience, but only after understanding the rules learnt in stages 1 and 2. The framework is useful for this study in demonstrating that every individual has the capability to develop themselves either in compliant or conscience roles.

Critics argue that Kohlberg's (1981) framework is not relevant to professionals because his study was undertaken using children as part of early childhood development studies. To address this criticism, Rest and Narvaez (1994) extended Kohlberg's work to professionals by redefining the six stages as stages of cooperation. They developed their Defining Issues Test, which is a series of multiple choice statements where the subjects are presented with moral dilemmas and are asked to evaluate the most important consideration using a five-point scale. Their results indicated that education, more than age, was a greater predictor of moral judgement development. They also found that the subjects aspired toward the higher stage, "When subjects comprehend two stages, they prefer the higher stage, and reject the lower stage for the same reason that Kohlberg gives in his theory for why a higher stage is better" (Rest & Narvaez, 1994, p. 12). They concluded their study by suggesting that moral behaviour is determined by four components (Rest & Narvaez, 1994, pp. 23-24): moral sensitivity (the awareness of how our actions affect other people); moral judgement (deciding which action is morally right or wrong); moral motivation (prioritising moral values in relation to other values); and, moral character (having courage, persistence, overcoming distractions, and implementing skills). These findings are important to the current study because they suggest that organizational values and organizational ethics may be influenced by educational intervention. While moral behaviour is not the focus of this study, these four components will be discussed in the analysis of the study's findings.

### 3.3.2 Development of organizational values

While many scholars write about the importance of organizational values and values-led organizations, very little literature cover the specific aspects of the organizational value-setting process. The paucity in literature implies an assumption that because organizations are personified (for example, the organization as family metaphor), organizational values develop in the same manner as individual

values. Whatever research on value setting has been approached largely from a managerial perspective rather than a dialogical process (Lozano & Sauquet, 1999).

Lozano and Sauquet (1999) describe a learning process that a Spanish gas company went through when it faced challenges resulting from a merger. Using a seminar approach they called ‘People and Organization’, 80 participants who were not members of the Executive committee were asked to undergo four stages which included: identifying the traits and challenges of the company; reflecting on which aspects of the job gave them the most personal and professional fulfilment; articulating the major values describing the individual-organization relationship, finding consensus on the values and their priority; and, reflecting on how these values can be realised in the company. This study emphasised the reflective and interpretive process approach in exploring ethical values within organizations. The authors concluded that the crucial point however is how to create the conditions which allow people to express their values through dialogue and be able to reflect on them. However, while the process described a participative and reflective approach, the reference to the ‘traits’ of the company assumed that the company had a persona. Despite this, the process allowed for an individual ‘interpretation’ of themselves vis-à-vis the company.

Similarly another participative approach takes the view of the organization as having a ‘persona’ and also incorporates, although not as clearly, one’s individual and personal values. Henderson and Thompson (2003) identified these stages as: identifying core values, drafting and redrafting the statement, and creating alignment (p. 96). They also argued that most companies spend too much time in the second stage rather than the more important third stage. They then identified a seven-phase process (Henderson & Thompson, 2003, pp. 97-100).

***Stage 1: Identifying Core Values***

***Phase 1:*** Identify a facilitator to lead the workshops where the groups are asked the following question: What has this organization stood for and consistently prioritised, no matter what circumstances it has faced? The responses are to be presented, reviewed and collated with the aim of finding overlaps and similarities. The facilitator then asks the group what they choose to prioritise to achieve their organization’s purpose? This process is repeated for vision, mission and strategies for purpose. The responses are again combined or deleted and the final list of preferably five values is then examined for appropriateness and expression.

***Phase 2:*** Discuss underlying beliefs around the selected values.

***Stage 2: Drafting and redrafting the statement***

**Phase 3:** Arrange the values list according to an order of priority.

**Phase 4:** Consider the consequences of both running the business and basing all decision on these values. Review past incidents and decisions and how values would have stood up. Test the values for their overall ability to achieve the organization's vision.

**Phase 5:** Get feedback from employees, preferably but not compulsory to ask all employees. If feedback is received which has not been considered, project team should reconvene.

**Phase 6:** Launch the values to the organization by informing and engaging staff with the new values. Internal marketing and collateral materials may be used but only to support the process.

**Stage 3: Creating alignment**

**Phase 7:** Align personal values of employees with the organizational values.

The above process looks at the organizational values first before the individual or personal values. In asking the focus groups what they think the organization stands for already implies that the process is asking the employees' their interpretation of the organization's values. While the authors acknowledged that a "value is only a genuine value of the organization when it is voluntarily chosen and acted upon by the people" (Henderson & Thompson, 2003, p. 105), they suggested that individuals should change their beliefs to make them align with the organization's values. This alignment of individual with the organization's values is the next step, and from which they suggested a behavioural change.

3.3.3 Aligning individual and organizational values

Values alignment, also referred to as value congruence in social psychology literature, occurs when the individual's values complement those of the organization (Henderson & Thompson, 2003, p. 78). While not necessarily requiring that individual and organizational values should be the same, it helps if they support each other. The overriding assumption here is that an organization where employees' individual values are aligned with the organizational values results in employee satisfaction which will lead to employee productivity and overall organizational effectiveness.

Several studies have shown that an alignment of individual values and organizational values results in employee satisfaction (Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1990); assist in organizational change (Sullivan et al., 2002); and encourage ethical decision-making (Bowen, 2004).

The definition may imply a certain level of control or alternatively a consensual arrangement. The question is whether individuals are aligning their values with the organization's values, or is the organization aligning itself with the individuals' values?

The first question proffers a picture of subjugation, of employees kowtowing to the organization's rule and changing their long held values and beliefs when they enter the workplace. Furthermore if public relations and communication practitioners were involved and promoted the alignment of individual values with organizational values, then it supports the notion asserted by Cheney and Christensen (2001) that "public relations as an institution has been more concerned with minimizing diversity of expression than promoting it" (p. 182). The second question, however, provides a more interesting and perhaps optimistic view that suggests that the individual communication practitioners within the organization can in fact define and shape the organization's values (Murray & White, 2005).

Barrett (1999) purports the view that organizations should look at individuals' values first and has since proposed the seven levels of consciousness model (Barrett, 1999; Groat & Stern, 2000). The seven levels include: physical survival, relationship consciousness, self-esteem consciousness, transformation consciousness, internal cohesion consciousness, making a difference and service. Barrett (1999) argues that how well organizations align their levels of consciousness with the levels of consciousness of their employees will determine employee satisfaction, productivity and creativity, which he feels are necessary for companies to prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (p. 34). While Barrett's model has not been tested or critiqued in academic literature, it is useful to point out that some major Australian organizations have used his model in their cultural transformation processes (Holloway, 2003, personal communication).

The question of value congruency relates to the problems associated with strong cultures and homogeneity (Maierhofer et al., 2003). Strong cultures have often been considered as 'ideal' because strong cultures can withstand the turbulence of the environment (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). This implies that the values of the company provide the stability despite changes in the internal and external environment. And yet strong cultures, because of a commonness in beliefs and behaviors, tend to negate the notion of diversity (Maierhofer et al., 2003, p. 26).

Strong cultures are associated with homogeneity which suggests that leaders will employ people who share the same values, and beliefs as they do (Schneider et al., 1995). In doing so, strong cultures are

assumed to lead to a more effective organization because of the minimal disruptions to the core business.

Proponents of requisite variety, pluralism and diversity would argue against the notion that homogenous organizations with value congruent, strong cultures are more effective in adapting to changes in the environment. On the contrary, the principle of requisite variety argues that an organization will be better prepared to withstand the effects of change if it is composed of members who can provide different points of view. Developed by W Ross Ashby in 1956 in the context of cybernetics in systems, the Law of Requisite Variety states that “The regulator must have as much or more variety, than the system it regulates. Control of a system depends on the variety of the regulator and the capacity of the channel between the regulator and the system”.

(<http://artsandscience.concordia.ca/edtech/ETEC606/requisite.html>).

The ability to adapt to the changing and complex environment reflects one of the key concepts of systems theory. The principle, adapted into organizational literature by Karl Weick (2001), suggests that organizations which are more complex, ergo more diverse, will be in a better position to respond to the complex world. So if homogeneity in organizations is considered potentially dangerous to both small and large organizations (Schneider et al., 1995), does it follow that organizations whose values are aligned with their employees’ individual values are in trouble? Or is it considered problematic only when it is the individuals who have to align with the organization’s, which in this case means the founder’s or CEO’s, values?

### **3.4 Values-based management/leadership**

Values-based management, or values-based leadership, has been synonymous with corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship. In developing the notion of values-based management, Peters and Waterman (1982) extolled the virtues of the excellent organization while Collins and Porras (1998) revealed core ideology as the ‘secret to success’ of visionary companies such as American Express, 3M, General Electric and Hewlett-Packard. In their study, they observed that core ideology which comprises core values and purpose existed strongly and guided the companies’ operations more than financial considerations. For these management writers, organizational values have been examined as a means to achieve the instrumentalist goals of success and excellence. From a process perspective however, it is useful to examine how value setting informs strategic planning and organizational change processes.

### 3.4.1 Value setting as part of strategic planning and organizational change processes

Strategic planning has been defined as the development of an organization's direction through the articulation of its vision, mission and values based on an analysis of its external and internal environments (Mintzberg, 1980; Graetz et al., 2002). Although this rational approach to planning has been criticised for its simplicity and inapplicability to more complex organizations, traditional strategic planning processes still include the articulation of a values statement that incorporates the organization's vision, mission, and values.

More recent thinking however suggests that values and vision should inform the strategy of the organization rather than vice versa and that strategic planning incorporates a more personalised inclusion of other stakeholders (McVea & Freeman, 2005). Similarly, understanding the organization's values and vision are important early steps in an organizational change process (Graetz et al., 2002; Kotter, 1996).

The importance of dialectical inquiry in strategic planning has been mentioned in several papers from the late sixties to the eighties (Mason, 1969; Mitroff, 1971; Benson, 1981; Schwenk, 1984a, 1984b, 1989; Cosier, with Aplin, 1980; 1981, 1983). In their early writings, these management scholars discussed how the dialectical inquiry and devil's advocacy models were used in the context of strategic planning and decision making within an uncertain and ambiguous environment—an environment not too dissimilar to what we have today. The results of the studies varied depending on whether they were undertaken in experimental or experiential conditions (Cosier & Aplin, 1980; Schweiger et al., 1989). In citing a major company's application of the inquirer process, Mitroff (1971) reported three benefits resulting from that debate:

- 1) it raised the consciousness for the first time of the real sources of the debate;
- 2) it characterised the opposing views of the company, i.e., it laid out the opposing views in propositional form; and
- 3) it allowed a synthetic, a third, position to emerge. (p. 636)

The importance of offering alternative viewpoints was stressed and was in fact expected for members involved in the strategic planning process. One of the studies by Schwenk and Mitroff (1982) compared four methods of inquiry for strategic planning namely: the expert approach (where plans are developed by experts); the devil's advocate approach (which critiques the experts' plan); the dialectical inquiry approach (which provides a counterplan to the experts' plan); and the combined devil's advocate and dialectical inquiry approach (which includes a critique and a counterplan). Because the expert approach

features the decision maker as having a ‘high tolerance for ambiguity’, the authors did not find it to be the best approach. Schwenk and his colleagues (1984a, 1984b, 1989, 1990, 1994) revealed that the dialectical process is important in decision-making because it strengthens the debate. This also allows for more reflexivity in the practice as called for by many critical and postmodern scholars in the field of public relations (L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) and organizational communication (Deetz, 2001; Mumby, 2001).

While recent rhetorical studies in public relations have shifted the focus to dialogue, the notions of inquiry and advocacy in strategic planning have not been explicitly emphasised in public relations scholarship. More emphasis has been given to stakeholder participation and inclusion but not necessary involvement, in the true sense of the word (Bernstein, 1982, cited in Seibold & Shea, 2001).

While Kotter (1996) stressed that communicating the change vision as an important fourth step in his eight-stage change process, Larkin and Larkin (1994) devoted a whole chapter in their book against communication practitioners communicating values. Although they believe communication is important in changing behaviour, the authors emphasized that it is best to communicate performance rather than values. Furthermore, they believed that “values emerge from the bottom. They are not imposed downward from the top” (Larkin & Larkin, 1994, p. 214). Unfortunately the authors did not distinguish whether this strategy is appropriate for organizations at different stages in their life cycle as earlier suggested (Schein, 1992). Perhaps the authors assumed an organization at a mature stage where a range of individual values already exists and needs to be “harvested” for the organizational change to proceed successfully.

Performance-based values, however, are not necessarily moral values (Brown & Treviño, 2003). In discussing the content of values in relation to leadership, the authors argued that performance values are indicative of ‘value-based leadership’ but not necessarily indicative of ‘ethical leadership’.

For this study, it was important to ask the respondents about these three different processes—if their organization had a recent change, their strategic planning process and their value-setting process. It was important to ascertain the context in which the value-setting processes occurred and what roles public relations/communication practitioners enact.

### 3.4.2 Values as a means of control

Because organizational values are viewed as an integrating mechanism, it is no surprise that organizational values can be construed as another way for management to control the employees' behaviors (Weaver et al., 1999; Griseri, 1998; Barker, 1999). On one hand, organizational values can be seen as a way for employees to identify themselves with the persona of the organization, assisting employees in their socialization process (Gibson & Papa, 2000). Another school of thought argues that organizational values through formal ethics programs are a means by which the organization controls employee behavior (Weaver et al., 1999).

In several articles in their book, *Managing Ethics in Business Organizations*, Treviño and Weaver (2003) mention the differences between compliance-oriented and values-oriented ethics programs. In their earlier work (Weaver et al., 1999), they posited that control systems are characterized by how systems 'standardise' behavior; how ethics programs can be more coercive to the following of rules and discipline (compliance orientation), or how ethics programs can be more supportive to employees' aspirations and values (values orientation). While they distinguished two kinds of orientations of formal ethics programs, they are careful to mention that these two orientations do not have to be mutually exclusive of each other. In fact, they asserted that some organizations may attempt to develop an ethics program where the values are internalized but also ensure the rules are complied with.

Formal corporate ethics programs have been described to include the following elements: formal ethics codes, ethics committees, ethics communication systems, ethics officers, ethics training programs, and disciplinary processes (Weaver et al., 1999, pp. 41-42). While they argued that ethics programs "attempt to bring some degree of order and predictability to employee behavior" (Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 192), others suggested that if the ethical codes were born out of a genuine desire to improve organizational behaviour (rather than as a reactive measure), then the effects of the ethical codes will be more positive and long lasting (Griseri, 1998, p. 162).

In their series of studies, a compliance-oriented program was usually worded in legal compliance terms which included rules and sanctions for non compliance. On the other hand, a values-oriented ethics program focused more on ideals such as 'respect' and 'responsibility' (Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 193). Interestingly in these studies, Treviño, Weaver and their associates (2003) explored control and compliance as one construct. Although they have not articulated it, when they said that the compliance-oriented ethics programs were indicative of overt control systems, which could be coercive in nature, they seem to have implied that the values-oriented programs of which commitment is the goal, are



reflective of the unobtrusive control mentioned by other scholars (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Barker, 1993, 1999).

One form of overt control system is the code of ethics. While some studies indicated that the existence of corporate codes of ethics seems to minimize unethical behaviour in organizations (Somers, 2001), codes of ethics do not necessarily encourage or increase the incidents of “whistle-blowing”. In a mail survey to US management accountants, Somers (2001) found that respondents were less influenced by professional codes of conduct than they were by their corporate code of conduct. Despite advocating that organizations should have a formal code of ethics and that they should be communicated well, Somers (2001) admits that the individual’s values have an overriding influence on other beliefs and attitudes (p. 143). Another study examined the presence of ethical codes as manifestations of ethical behaviour. A survey of US public affairs executives revealed that of the 82 companies represented, only 26 have written codes, 32 have unwritten codes only, nine have both, and 15 have none (Heath & Ryan, 1989, p. 27). On public relations’ involvement in creating standards, 47 admitted to varying levels of involvement with 19 stating they were very much involved, and seven had no involvement at all (Heath & Ryan, 1989, p. 27). The finding that companies most concerned with their internal and external publics were the ones most likely to have a code and monitored public opinion implies that the existence of a code may be a form of response to community or regulatory demands. So are ethical codes a form of compliance? If so then, are practitioners involved in the creation of ethical codes encouraging compliance?

How do middle managers, such as public relations and communication practitioners, reconcile their individual values and the organizational values which they are supposed to express?

A study by management scholars investigated corporate ideology, which includes organizational values and control among middle managers in the United Kingdom (Turnbull, 2001). Focusing on the vulnerability of middle managers, the study looked at how middle managers made sense of top down ideological messages. She identified three factors which determined whether middle managers will ‘play the game’ and adopt values imposed on the company from the top. These factors are: fear of being ‘deviant’; the temporary ability to internalise the values required by the ideology; and the desire to belong and find ‘self identity’ (p. 232). Furthermore, when she asked the managers about their views on the launch of new corporate values, Turnbull (2001) identified six types of responses--the critical thinkers; the untouched professionals; evangelists; open cynics; sceptics; and, actors (pp. 236-237). These findings suggest the range of roles enacted by middle managers as a reaction to or within the

context of organizational value change. Because the current study interviews public relations and communication practitioners who occupy middle management positions within the context of value setting, Turnbull's (2001) findings are extremely relevant.

### **3.5 Integrating a dialectical perspective in organizational values change**

What seems to be missing in the discussion about the development of individual vis-à-vis organizational values is the amount of discussion that occurs during the process. Ideally, organizational values, except those imposed from the top, require several rounds, as it were, of defining, re-defining, sorting out and filtering, and negotiation by organizational members before they are accepted as reflective of the organization's persona.

This process is underpinned by communication among stakeholders and as the communication experts, public relations/communication practitioners are integral to the process. These processes entail sifting through the various meanings and interpretations of the words which symbolise the organization's values. Because various individuals are involved in the process, it is expected that they will bring with them their own meanings and interpretations to the table. As Seeger (1997) pointed out, communication is integral particularly in sorting out the relationships between values. He cites Conrad (1993),

It is through discourse that individuals develop their own views of morality; through discourse that organizations develop and inculcate core values and ethical codes; and through discourse that incongruities within individual and organizational value-sets are managed and contradictions between the value sets of different persons are negotiated (p.2, cited in Seeger, 1997, p 6).

Emphasising the importance of a discursive process, Seeger (1997) suggests that values find clarity only after they are "talked" about.

Discussing, debating challenging, and seeking clarification, are necessary in making informed ethical judgments. Without such talk, values remain confused and equivocal, little consensus develops about which ethics are appropriate in which context and the probabilities of making an ethically suspect judgment are significantly enhanced (Seeger, 1997, p. 6).

Mumby (2005) recently wrote about the importance of integrating a dialectical perspective in studying control and resistance in organizations. He argued that organizational behaviour can be examined through the discursive framework particularly how "organizational stakeholders and interest groups engage with, resist, accommodate, reproduce, and transform the interpretive possibilities and meaning systems that constitute daily organizational life" (Mumby, 2005, p. 22). Using dialectical analysis allows the exploration of tensions and contradictions in a process where employees, such as

communication practitioners, try to shape and influence organizational behaviour (Mumby, 2005, p. 23).

A dialectical view, according to Benson (1977, p. 265), is “fundamentally committed to the concept of process.” In discussing the value of dialectical perspective in a “social world (that) is in a continuous state of becoming” (p. 265), he enumerates the four principles of dialectical analysis. These are: social construction/production, totality, contradiction and praxis. Benson (1977) draws on Marxist analyses to describe these four principles.

### 3.5.1 Social construction/production

He suggests that people continually construct their social world through several interactions and in doing so, form relationships, define roles, and build institutions. As individuals pursue more interactions, these arrangements undergo some transformation. Usually the constraints of the organization, such as financial imperatives, legal issues, as well as power structures impact on how individuals construct their social world. But he contends it is when individuals “transcend these limits”, which bring them into conflict with the existing order, that will lead to social change. For the public relations/communication practitioners, who are at the heart of constructing the social reality of their organization’s internal and external stakeholders through their creation of communicative symbols through text and images as well as strategies for dissemination of these symbols, this element of the dialectic process is well within their area of responsibility. However, the practitioners need to be made aware that this process is open for them to pursue if they want to be instrumental in social change.

### 3.5.2 Totality

This concept of dialectical thought shares some similarity with a key concept of systems theory where each element is part of a whole. The dialectic process suggests that phenomena should be studied in context, according to their relationship with the larger parts to which they are interconnected. While acknowledging the complexity of studying various components within a holistic structure, focus on how those elements interplay and the consequent politics need to be emphasised. So for a public relations/communication practitioner, this part of the process requires an understanding of the power relationships that exist, how each business unit relates to the other, and which department heads need to be identified as allies in order for the practitioner to assess how existing or new work arrangements may develop to improve the overall organizational context.

### 3.5.3 Contradiction

Benson (1977) argues that in some systems, contradictions and inconsistencies, are necessary to keep them functioning. However there are also contradictions that destroy the system. Compared to conventional theoretical approaches which aim to find order among the elements of a system, the dialectical approach treats these elements as constructed with possibilities for transformation. In effect the dialectical approach, while accepting the system for its totality, does not accept that the elements within that system are static and beyond reproach. Admittedly, contradictions can cause disruptions and further constraints within organizations but they can be expected to be there, especially when considering the differences of individuals within an organization. To the public relations/communication practitioner, exploring and exposing contradiction at an early stage of an issue, for example, may actually provide the senior management with more time to address it and offer solutions before it blows out to be a full fledged crisis. For practitioners, an awareness and an acceptance that contradiction may be a necessary condition are valuable in engaging their work colleagues who join them in the hope of improving the current system.

### 3.5.4 Praxis

This principle of dialectical thought refers to the ‘free and creative reconstruction of social arrangements on the basis of reasoned analysis of both the limits and the potentials of present social forms’ (Benson, 1977, p. 267). What is important in this concept is the emphasis given to the individuals’ awareness of limitations and potentialities in their pursuit of social change. In doing so, individuals are given some latitude in working with the constraints of the system but not letting those constraints deter them from exploring new possibilities. In fact, in the dialectical process, it seems that the individual is continually challenged to find new and innovative ways to solve problems within the contradiction and limits of the existing system.

As Mumby (2005) suggests, Benson’s (1977) concept of praxis is extremely relevant to this discussion about ethics and the individual practitioner.

The commitment to praxis is both a description—that is, that people under some circumstances can become active agents reconstructing their own social relations and ultimately themselves on the basis of rational analysis—and an ethical commitment—that is, that social science should contribute to the process of reconstruction, to the liberation of human potential through the production of new social formations (p. 267).

For organizations undergoing change or renewal, the principle of praxis is extremely important. It gives the individual employee, the communication practitioner for instance, the imprimatur or the license to become an active agent who is able to reconstruct the environment (organization) in which he or she

operates. The concept of praxis encourages ethical responsibility of individuals and this represents an area where public relations and communication practitioner should explore further.

By playing a fundamental role in generating scientific and moral truth and by allowing genuine dialogue between the organization and its stakeholders, public relations can engage in ethical business practice (Pearson, 1989b). Pearson's (1989b) idea of a true and genuine dialogue includes a dialectical process. He cites Cherwitz's work in describing the process: (1977, cited in Pearson, 1989b, p. 125).

1. There must be a genuine clash of attitudes—they have to meet and truly challenge each other. It is not enough just to express them, to inject them into the process.
2. Participants must have equal control and initiative in the communication process.
3. Participants must truly risk their own point of view and be prepared to modify it.

Similarly, Burluson and Kline's requirements (cited in Pearson, 1989b, p. 126) advocate equal opportunities for participants to start and maintain the discourse, challenge, explain and interpret; that the interactions are free of manipulation, dominance and control; and equal power among participants.

While the last condition of power equality is difficult to ascertain, the above conditions for genuine dialogue and therefore ethical business communication practice emphasizes the need for a dialectical process. Dialectical process is defined here by Pearson (1989b, pp. 119-120) as the "process in which a thesis is opposed by an antithesis followed by a synthesis of both points of view." This concept as it applies to strategic planning and the communication practitioner is discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

If communication practitioners wish to engage in strategic communication planning, it is crucial that a dialectical process be integrated to make the process more meaningful and genuine. Furthermore, through applying a dialectical process in the organizational value-setting process, communication practitioners can understand how their involvement in value construction can effect a more holistic change not only for the organization but perhaps also for the society in which the organization operates. This impact on society is what some public relations scholars suggest as critical to public relations' recognition as a true profession (Cutlip et al., 2000, p. 146).

### **3.6 Professionalism and organizational values**

A discussion on organizational ethics and values inevitably leads to a discussion on professionalism, and vice versa (Cutlip et al., 2000). Professionalism requires public relations practitioners to act as "moral agents" in society suggesting that ethical practice requires them to put "public service and social responsibility over personal gains and private special interests," (Cutlip et al., 2000, p. 148).

Furthermore, to demonstrate one's commitment to ethical and professional practice, practitioners should be able to resign from a client or from a job when the organization's principles ran counter to the practitioner's individual values (Cutlip et al., 2000). As such, professionalism in public relations always points to three requisites: body of knowledge, ethics, and certification (Piezcka & L'Etang, 2001). Cutlip and his colleagues qualified these into four indicators: specialized educational preparation; recognition by community; autonomy in practice and acceptance of personal responsibility by practitioners; and, codes of ethics (2000, p. 149).

Bivins (1989) had earlier suggested that the public relations professional required autonomy, objectivity and independent thinking. The description of the professional extends to that of a moral agent as someone who is autonomous, responsible and accountable for his/her actions and can make his or her own decisions without being under someone's control (Bowie, 1982, cited in Bivins, 1989, p. 71). Autonomy does not only mean independent decision-making but also "the ability, and duty, to consider and present all viewpoints" (Bivins, 1987, p. 196). A public relations practitioner's exercise of autonomy differentiates an advocate (technician) role from an advisor (manager) role, as well as a professional practitioner from a non-professional (Bivins, 1987, 1989).

These elements of autonomy and professionalism are crucial in developing the organizational conscience agency role of the public relations practitioner. The practitioner as an agent exercises autonomy when acting on behalf of himself or herself especially when calling on the individual's conscience as a moral compass for decision-making. For example, when someone is employed and paid a wage, the expectation is that loyalty and a certain sense of autonomy is exchanged in favour of the party providing the financial remuneration. However the question is whether the individual should completely surrender his or her moral judgement based on an exchange arrangement. A practitioner becomes a professional if one's agency is not compromised. As a professional, the expectation is that the practitioner is an agent of his or her own self with the purpose of practising in an ethical and socially responsible manner. Being an agent of oneself however does not mean that one practises in pursuit of one's self interest. Rather, individuals who practise autonomy within the context of professional and ethical standards enable themselves to think critically and avoid the phenomenon of groupthink<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Groupthink refers to a "mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in cohesive in-group, when the members' striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (Janis, cited in Miller, 2003, p. 165).

Despite the amount of literature on public relations ethics and professionalism (for example, Bivins, 1987, 1992; Barney & Black, 1994; Martinson, 1994; Fitzpatrick, 1996; Day et al., 2001; Curtin & Boynton, 2001, the role of the public relations and communication practitioner in the development or construction of organizational values and ethics has not been explored. Public relations scholarship on ethics has either been descriptive (which companies have codes of ethics, Heath & Ryan, 1989) or normative (Fitzpatrick, 1996; Judd, 1989; R Leeper, 1996). Some public relations scholars (Judd, 1989; Curtin & Boynton, 2001; Day et al., 2001) have suggested that ethical public relations practice and social responsibility are related to the practitioner's role (senior, advisory) in the organization. Pearson (1989) suggested that public relations should take the cudgels of moral conduct for its organization. He states, "Corporate public relations departments, to the extent that they are concerned with how a corporate communicates with its publics, are charged with the responsibility of managing the moral dimension of corporate conduct" (Pearson, 1989, p. 128). And yet Fitzpatrick's (1996) study found very few practitioners are involved in the institutionalization of ethics.

Heath and Ryan (1989) suggested three options in balancing social responsibility with profit making, the third option, monitoring and responding, holding the most promise, "Talented, well-educated public relations practitioners can help corporate leaders by teaching them ethical standards" (p. 23). While encouraging for public relations, the assumption that this statement makes is that corporate leaders have no ethical base and have to look to public relations practitioners to help them develop those standards. It also presumes that public relations practitioners are in a position where they are allowed or eligible to "teach" corporate leaders, and that ethical standards can be taught over a short period of time. Thus it is perhaps best to explore to what extent are public relations practitioners involved in this role, and in what other ethical activities may they be involved. Is the public relations practitioner influential enough to influence the organization to behave ethically? Is the practitioner's involvement in value setting indicative of one's enactment of his or her professional role?

### **3.7 Summary**

To summarize, this chapter showed how organizational value setting is an integral part of organizational culture change processes and organizations that subscribe to values-based management, and yet very little research has examined the value-setting process. Furthermore, the chapter also discussed how public relations and communication practitioners could be involved in value setting particularly within the strategic decision-making realm. Organizational values comprise the core of organizational culture which has been identified as the basis of transformational leadership. As such, it is critical that the organizational culture allows its members to openly discuss and reflect on the organization's values as they relate to their own personal values. The chapter also defined values and

the types of values as they relate to individual, group and organizational levels. Further, while literature was limited on the processes of organizational value setting, there have been several studies on organizational values' importance, content and congruence. Having an environment that promotes dialogue is unfortunately still highly dependent on the leadership of the organization. As organizational value setting indicates a leadership function, and leadership implies influencing others, it is appropriate to examine the concepts of power, control and influence and public relations/communication practitioners.



## CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING PRACTITIONER POWER, INFLUENCE, AND LEADERSHIP

*“The wicked leader is he who the people despise.  
The good leader is he who the people revere.  
The great leader is he who the people say, 'We did it ourselves.'”  
-Lao-Tzu*

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have alluded to the immense power public relations practitioners exercise in ‘manufacturing consent’ (Stauber & Rampton, 1995) or in creating organizational culture (Cheney & Dionisopoulos, 1989). And yet, practitioners perceive their powers and influence are limited unless they are members of the dominant coalition. In determining the roles enacted by public relations practitioners in organizational value setting, it is useful to investigate how power, control and influence interact with organizational structures and relationships. As discussed in Chapter 3, organizational values when used as integrative mechanisms become means of control by management. Public relations and communication practitioners, as part of working with various external and internal publics, develop relationships which are by nature wrought with power plays (Foucault, 1997; Spicer, 1997). Furthermore, the organizational environments in which the practitioners operate are rife with a complex web of relationships that are prone to power and influence.

But does the practitioner really possess enough power and influence to affect behavioural change in the organization through their involvement in organizational value setting? If so, how can this power and influence be cultivated to do ‘what is right’ and ‘what is good’? To address these questions, this chapter will look at how the concepts of power, control and influence relate to practitioners’ enactment of the conscience and organizational value-setting role.

This chapter first examines the sources of organizational power, and how practitioners access these power sources. The next section discusses how the types of control define and describe organizational cultures. In particular, it examines the notion of concertive control prevalent in participative cultures. Understanding the power bases and controls that exist in organization, the third section explores influence strategies and how practitioners exercise their influence. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on leadership.

## 4.2 Sources of power

As mentioned earlier, public relations and communication practitioners are perceived to wield a lot of power in organizations by virtue of their knowledge, position and work as ‘relationship managers’ and boundary spanners. But what is power?

Conceptions of power vary across theoretical perspectives. Mumby (2001) has summarised the different conceptions of power and communication from the systems-rationality, interpretivist, critical theory, postmodernist, and feminist perspectives (p. 594). While the different perspectives offer a focus on different areas (for example, resource dependency for systems-rationality and gendered systems in the feminist), power is still described as the capacity to “get things done or getting others to do what you want them to do” (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 3).

Traditional conceptions of organizational power suggest that the dominant coalition and the organizational structures have the exclusive hold on power. In quoting J. K. Galbraith’s ideas that the locus of power has shifted from land to capital to “organized expertise”, Cheney et al. (2004) contended that “communication is a source of power” (p. 250). They argued that only a few people are able to construct communication and knowledge and that the ability to do so provides them some kind of power. Communication practitioners fall in this category.

Another view however has suggested that individuals within organizational (and governmental) systems also exercise power through resistance and activism (Berger & Reber, 2006; Knowles & Linn, 2004; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Jermier et al., 1994; Pfeffer, 1992). More importantly, communication practitioners who traditionally use their persuasion skills to gain compliance and advocate on behalf of the dominant coalitions are exploring the use of power to represent marginalised groups (Roper, 2005; Berger, 2005; Holtzhausen, 2000). In a special issue of the *Journal of Public Relations Research* entitled “Public Relations from the Margins”, Moffitt (2005) proposed the need to explore the “sociopolitical context that surrounds the organization and the notion that power exists in other sites besides the dominant coalition (p. 3).”

In effect, organizational power may be construed as emerging from individuals and groups. Based on this view, organizational power may be defined as the “ability of individuals and groups to control and shape dominant interpretations of organizational events” (Mumby, 2001, p. 595). The question however is which individuals, and which groups, have access to power.

In explicating the concept of power, often cited are John French and Bertram Raven's typology of the five bases of power--reward power; coercive power; legitimate power; referent power; and expert power (Cheney et al., 2004). When discussing power however, the relationship between two people is emphasised because one's perception of the other person determines whether he or she has power over the other. *Reward* power refers to one's control over the distribution of resources and rewards while *coercive* power implies control over punishments or reprimands. *Legitimate* power or authoritative power implies control based on one's position in the hierarchy. On the other hand, *referent* power comes from one's identification with the other person, usually as a result of the object's charisma. The fifth source of power, *expert* power stems from one's specialist knowledge, information or skills (Berger & Reber, 2006, pp. 76-77).

Combining this typology with the literature on practitioner roles suggest that communication practitioners have a natural hold on expert power and have limited levels of the other power sources. But is that an appropriate assumption? Furthermore, are practitioners content with expert power alone?

One recent study revealed that positional power is an important issue. When 219 public relations professionals, teachers and graduate students were asked, via an online survey, what they considered the two most important issues in public relations, gaining a 'seat at the decision-making table' topped the list of 19 issues (Berger & Reber, 2006, pp. 5-6). Respondents commented that this positional statement is required to establish their reputation as a profession and as an important player in strategic decision-making. This finding demonstrates that the study respondents perceive the need for public relations practitioners to be at the 'decision-making' table to exercise power and influence, despite other research (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) saying otherwise. The online survey also revealed that the second most important issue was measuring the 'value of public relations'. When asked to explain their responses, the respondents stated that their ability to voice and practise ethical decision making in their organizations somehow hinge on their being part of the decision-making group in the first place.

While membership in the dominant coalition as discussed previously does not necessarily guarantee power, influence or being listened to, it provides practitioners with the 'veil' of power, access and the opportunity to express one's voice among the key decision makers (Berger & Reber, 2006).

As various scholars have observed recently, very little public relations and communication research has touched on understanding power relationships (Leitch & Neilson, 1997; Pieczka & L'Etang, 1996; Holtzhausen, 2000; Berger & Reber, 2006). Perhaps this was because of the overriding

managerial/functionalist view that public relations practice assumed, which links closely to Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Drawing from Gramsci's definition, Deetz, (2001) defined hegemony as the "ability of one class or group to link the interests and worldviews of other groups with its own. Hegemony does not refer to simple domination, but rather involves attempts by various groups to articulate meaning systems that are actively taken up by other groups" (p. 587). To address these gaps, some scholars have recently undertaken research on power.

Whether practitioners want to understand power to know how to work with it to achieve social change or to suppress others is really a choice they have to make. Durham (2005) argues that practitioners can become powerful social actors. He points out that the "the opportunity for public relations practitioners is to become conscious of their ability to act for change, alone and together, apart from the working routine (p. 33)." In analysing the crisis Aventis CropScience faced with their StarLink corn, Durham (2005) pointed out the tensions that public relations practitioners faced between the positivist orientation of bioengineering, and the ideological and interpretive orientation of the community. Drawing on Giddens's theory of structuration, he argued that if practitioners see themselves as active agents who are able to engage in dialogue and interpret the crisis from several perspectives, they might be able to be more reflexive and actually redefine the rules that will be more beneficial to society (Durham, 2005, pp. 44-45).

However, as the case also illustrated, practitioners are still not maximising their power potential to "do the right thing". How much longer can practitioners sit on the fence? What barriers exist that limit practitioners to exercise power for 'good'?

### **4.3 Organizational control**

While Giddens's (2002) structuration theory already addresses the duality of agency and structure, practitioners with a predominant functionalist perspective may still perceive that their ability to enact change is constrained by the amount of control organizations embed in their systems. Many scholars have debated the tensions between action and structure as determinants of organizational action (Conrad & Haynes, 2001). On one hand structure is being blamed for the constraints on organizational action. And on another, action perspectives tend to be too symbolic and subjective (Conrad & Haynes, 2001, p. 55).

The notion of organization control has been mentioned as far back as Max Weber's ideas of authority and bureaucracy (Conrad & Poole, 2005). Traditional forms of organizing point to the bureaucratic and

hierarchical organizational structures which led to metaphors describing organizations within those structures as machines.

Classical organizations are structured based primarily on the owner/founder being able to control the production process to make it more efficient. As the organizations increased in size, and more people were employed, the need for more control consequently increased. The control processes employed within organizations are not only restricted to the employees, but also to the products, and processes. Within bureaucratic structures, rules and procedures are very rigid and employees are expected to follow the rules strictly based on a system of sanctions, penalties and rewards. An example of this type of structure would be a military organization.

Edwards (1981) identified three kinds of organizational controls namely, simple, technical, and bureaucratic. He described simple control as typical of a family store, for example, where employees (which could be the son or daughter) are directly supervised and monitored, and rewarded at the discretion of the owner (parent). Edwards (1981) suggests this kind of organizational control is effective if the head of the business is competent and fair.

On the other hand, technical control is characterised by an assembly line business where the processes are so rigid and dependent on machinery that the supervision and monitoring is impersonal. Because factories are required to meet certain quality standards for their products, the production processes need to be rigid and repetitive. As such the people who operate the machinery need to be fairly controlled and focussed on the task so that every single product that comes out of the machine is exactly the same as the others. Because machines are involved, the employees need to be highly trained on how to use the equipment as well as how to spot irregularities in the products coming out of the process. In this way, employees are supervised as extensions of the machines in a rather impersonal way. But because the employees are well controlled, the business is very efficient. Rewards are fairly definitive, usually as an incentive related to one's productivity. In this kind of control system, compliance with rules is valued as highly as productivity (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). The downside to this highly efficient and highly routinized operation is that it alienates the employees because of the impersonal nature of the work.

The third kind of control, bureaucratic, is reflective of the kind of controls in many large organizations (Edwards, 1981). Control is imposed through the establishment of rules, regulations, standards, procedures and policies which employees must adhere to as part of their employment contracts. While

new employees learn most of the formal rules as part of a formal induction program, many informal rules are learned on the job through the socialization process. For organizations exercising this kind of control, ideally rewards based on merit are made known to the employees from a clear set of criteria. This way everyone in the organization knows what kind of behaviour and performance are expected and will be rewarded. Bureaucratic controls bring about effective and efficient outcomes although power can be concentrated on those enforcing the rules. Furthermore, because of the rigidity of the organizational structure and reporting lines, creativity is severely limited.

As more organizations embraced human relations models, controlling employees as if they were machines somewhat diminished. The emergence of participative decision-making models allowed employees to be more involved in various processes within the organization, to which the 'family' metaphor of the organization was ascribed (Morgan, 1997). Because this 'newer' model of organising was seen to be more democratic and more humanistic than the earlier bureaucratic and rigid organizations, it became popular because it was assumed that the employees were taking more control of their own workplace for the benefit of the organization.

However, research by Tompkins and Cheney (1985) revealed that organizations, which used the human relations model and reflected participative cultures, also experienced certain controls that were 'unobtrusive'. The theory of unobtrusive control introduced by Tompkins and Cheney (1985) suggests that the locus of control shifts from management to employees under the pretext of participatory management and consensus. In this model, workers work through their control mechanisms by negotiating and developing their own values. Because it is developed from the employees, the values are perceived to be 'proper' and 'right' albeit the values systems have been derived from guidelines provided by management.

To further this concept on unobtrusive control, James Barker (1993), explored how self-managing teams, prevalent in participative cultures, exercised discipline.

#### 4.3.1 Concertive control

Barker (1993) undertook an ethnographic case study of self-managing teams within ISE Communications. As part of his research, he immersed himself in the organization over three years to explore how self-managing teams and the processes of value change demonstrated concertive control. In his study, Barker (1993) found that concertive control can actually be more controlling than a bureaucratic system.

According to Cheney et al. (2004), concertive control usually exists in flat organizational structures where organizational members have a high level of education or training and where teamwork and coordination are integral to the work. The authors suggest however that this form of control could also very well exist in large social organizations such as churches, labour unions, and social advocacy groups because of the required “adherence to core values” (p. 265).

Because the concertive control system requires self regulation and self discipline, employees working under this system often find themselves stressed and in a difficult position. Often employees have to discipline not only themselves but also their peers and colleagues. Public relations practitioners working in collaborative teams often find themselves in these situations. The theory of concertive control uses “interpersonal relationships and teamwork as a subtle form of control” (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 312) because of its reliance on shared reality and shared values.

Barker and Cheney (1994) identified the disciplinary aspects of organizational control to maintain order and consistency. This control is enforced through power but this power is implemented through the establishment of disciplinary measures unlike the overt ways exercised by those in the military. Instead, the disciplinary controls are assimilated into the normal behavioural patterns within the organization and become more covert.

How do organizations exercise disciplinary control? Littlejohn (1999) cites four ways. One way is through unobtrusive means where the discipline is imposed through normal routines, such as working hours. Once the employee accepts his or her work hours, then he or she is willing to be controlled. Secondly, employees develop their disciplinary measures in a collaborative way. For example, setting meetings where everyone agrees how long the meeting should be and what time it starts and ends. The third way discipline is implemented is through social relations. How one acts and talks and what one talks about and does not talk about are learned as part of one’s socialization processes in the organization. Employees do not learn this in the formal induction programs but usually in informal situations such as the tea room, and more recently, outside the office where smoking employees have a ‘smoko’ (Australian slang for smoking break). The fourth and probably most effective and most relevant to this study is through the values that are supposed to motivate employees. Values in this sense may refer to material values such as money, time and levels of accomplishment or intangibles which relate to pride, teamwork and commitment.

In Barker's study (1993), the discourses of self managing teams and participatory decision-making were found to be more powerful, and perhaps more deceptive and dangerous, than the latent forms of organizational control in a bureaucratic and hierarchical system. Employees who have been part of a process, for example in a value-setting process, may in fact feel and believe that they had an impact and influenced the direction of the organization's culture, values and behaviours. And they very may well have. It is just important for them to ask, who is setting the initial guidelines and parameters for the value-setting process?

Because of their participation, employees tend to identify and readily accept the process and the concepts within it. Why would employees allow themselves to be controlled by the organization? Tompkins and Cheney (1985, pp. 186-187) offer three reasons. First, they suggest that when individuals join organizations, they "sacrifice a degree of autonomy". Second, they accept the organization's decisions because they accept wages or salaries in exchange. Third, the authors point out is the "aura of authority". Authority is initially a perception of power by the receiver of the authority, and is eventually confirmed once the receiver accepts the superior's 'aura' of authority.

In his critique on how hegemony has been applied in communication studies and organizational communication, Mumby (1997) warned against the tendency for scholars to focus on domination and resistance, which he believes does not capture the true essence of Gramsci's philosophy of praxis. His interpretation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony is that it is more a "process of struggle" rather than an "existing state of consensual domination" (Mumby, 1997, p. 365). This distinction is useful for this research because it acknowledges that organizational processes are continually in a state of flux and tensions. And in the midst of these tensions is the public relations/communication practitioner in the daily conduct of his or her role. Barker (1999) argues that teams should be able to regularly and systematically discuss and critique their own controlling behaviours while assessing their own moral views. He concludes that many employees are willing to put up with the consequences of concertive control as long as they know why and how they can "do well and do good" (Barker, 1999, pp. 190-191).

In summary, concertive control is used by many contemporary organizations to manage the multiple identities that exist within one organization. In some way, finding a commonality among the complex and multiplicity of individual identities and corresponding value systems is a way of developing the organization's identity. Recognizing diversity as a means of finding a common pattern of identity to



which organizational members can identify, may be a more realistic way than the traditional one size fits all approach to creating organizational identity.

#### **4.4 Persuasive influence**

Rhetorical scholars argue that persuasive communication aims to influence people to do things they would otherwise not do or consider. Communication practitioners by virtue of their facility with communication and persuasion, combined with their access to information, internal and external to the organization, tend to enact highly influential and powerful roles, despite not occupying high-level executive positions. As managers, communicators have a key responsibility to acquire, analyse, and disseminate information and this responsibility alone gives the capability to exercise the ‘information is power’.

Related to the notions of leadership and power discussed earlier is the concept of influence. Undoubtedly the concepts of power and influence are often used interchangeably especially within the context of public relations. However other scholars distinguish influence as the process by which power is exercised. So one influences another to get things done (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 4).

From the viewpoint of the target of the influence attempt, social influence is the “change in the actions, attitudes, or beliefs of a person resulting from induction by another person or group—the influencing agent” (Kelman, 2001, p. 11). Regardless of its nature, the influence attempt represents “an effort to change the other’s behavior or thinking” (Kelman, 2001, p. 12).

##### 4.4.1 Influence tactics

Similarly, Yukl (1981) describes influence as the effect one party (the agent) has on another party (the target). Several scholars have identified different influence tactics and strategies (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980; Yukl, 1981, Kelman, 2001). These include: legitimate request; instrumental compliance; coercion; rational persuasion; rational faith; inspirational appeal; indoctrination; information distortion; situational engineering; personal identification; decision identification (Yukl, 1981, p. 11); manipulation, facilitation (Kelman, 2001, pp. 12-13).

The initial version (Kipnis et al., 1980) of the Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) identified eight dimensions of influence which were later trimmed down to seven—reason, friendliness, coalition, bargaining, assertiveness, higher authority, and sanctions (Kipnis et al., 1984). The different types of influence enumerated above could result in a range of behaviours that may range from

compliance, to inspiration to manipulation to commitment. The range of influence and persuasive tactics demonstrate the potential to use persuasion in either an ethical or an unethical manner.

Yukl and Falbe (1990) examined influence tactics based on direction—upward, downward or lateral-- and found that consultation and rational persuasion were the tactics used more frequently regardless of the direction of influence. However, their study did not mention which tactic or strategy was most effective.

From a communication perspective, influence is the aim of any persuasive activity. Public relations/communication practitioners in the normal enactment of their communicative activities wittingly or unwittingly attempt influence. From a management perspective, influence is associated with leadership. In fact, the essence of leadership has been defined to be its “influence over followers” (Yukl, 1981, p. 10). However, this definition restricts the ability of followers to influence leaders.

#### 4.4.2 Upward influence

More recent studies on upward influence (Cable & Judge, 2003; Farmer et al., 1997; Floyd & Woolridge, 1997; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Ralston et al., 2005; Schilit, 1987) however suggest that the choice of influence strategies depends on several factors including, for example, length of ‘service’ with a superior (Schilit, 1987), leadership style of supervisor (Cable & Judge, 2003), life stage and culture (Ralston et al., 2005); and education of subordinates (Farmer et al., 1997; Carroll & Gillen, 2002).

When the nine tactics in Kipnis’s typology were tested in relation to the target’s task commitment and the manager’s effectiveness, the questions to the managers’ subordinates, boss and peers showed that the most effective tactics were rational persuasion, inspirational appeal and consultation. Pressure, coalition and legitimation were found to be the least effective tactics. Interestingly, ingratiation and exchange were useful for influencing subordinates and peers but not for superiors. Ingratiation is described as a tactic that makes the target person feel good or important. Rational persuasion was found most effective for upward influence (Yukl & Tracey, 1992).

More recently, Yukl, Chavez and Seifert (2005) examined two new constructs, collaboration and apprising, as distinct proactive influence tactics. They found that “collaboration was highly effective for influencing subordinates and peers” (p. 722). Collaboration involves the agent, in this case for example, the public relations/communication practitioner, facilitating and making the process easier and perhaps less costly for the target (superior or subordinate). They also posited that collaboration results in commitment rather than compliance. Apprising, on the other hand, involves the agent explaining the

reasons why the proposal will benefit the target individual. The agent may not necessarily provide the benefits but the target individual will benefit in some way out of acquiescing to the agent's request. For this tactic, the researchers suggest that compliance is a desired outcome.

Recently, O'Neil (2003a, 2003b, 2004) examined the notion of upward influence among public relations practitioners. Her survey of 309 US practitioners measured their agreements to statements on upward influence tactics, gender, organizational role, gender ratio of dominant coalition, employee support, reporting relationship, participation in networks of the dominant coalition, mentor relationships, and perceptions of value. She found that three tactics namely, rationality, coalition and assertiveness contributed the most to organizational influence by public relations practitioners. Moreover, the study revealed that ingratiation does not add to organizational influence. Her studies found that practitioners' ability to effectively engage in persuasive communication toward a supervisor, which is called upward influence, are explained by the amount and type of the practitioner's organizational power and not by gender. More importantly, she emphasised that upward influence is shaped by informal and formal power.

#### 4.4.3 Factors affecting practitioner influence

As the previous discussion suggests, several factors affect the communication practitioner's ability to exercise influence within the organization. The Excellence Study found that membership in the dominant coalition by the top communicators was instrumental in the communication department's excellence. However the study also revealed that while membership in the dominant coalition by the top communicator helps within the context of power and influence, it was not necessary for communication excellence (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 83). They cited that despite three quarters of excellent organizations reporting communication practitioners as members of the dominant coalition, a quarter of the excellent organizations had communication practitioners who are not members of the dominant coalition.

The Excellence Study also found that it was not the reporting relationships that determined the communicator's influence on the dominant coalition. Rather it was the practitioner's access to the top decision makers (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 84). So a communication practitioner does not have to report directly to the CEO to wield his or her influence.

Other studies have found that public relations' membership in the dominant coalition is not necessary to be successful and influential. Instead, practitioner influence within the organization was attributed to more individual factors such as personal characteristics, relationship building, expertise and opportunity

to gain power (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 78). Furthermore, membership in the dominant coalition was viewed as a dangerous threat to the practitioner's ability to enact an organizational activist role because of the power relationships that could occur in that elite group.

Biopower or personal power which results from one's "self knowledge particularly in the form of moral consciousness" has been found to be a key factor in practitioners' enactment of organizational activism (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 69).

Similarly, another study identified organizational activism as a way of influencing organizations. Based on his interviews with 21 US public relations executives and a critique of the dominant coalition concept, Berger (2005) suggests that practitioners need to think of activism as a third role to add to the manager-technician typology. He argues that practitioners who are members of dominant coalitions still face barriers in 'doing the right thing', and especially face the pressure of organizational compliance. He posits that dominant coalition practitioners are as likely to be influenced by the power dynamics within that group as the practitioners are likely to influence the other members. He cites a public relations executive who expressed difficulty towing a 'bad party line' despite his own disagreement with it. Other barriers faced by public relations practitioners in dominant coalitions include: presence of multiple coalitions, shifting coalition venues and roles, multiple checkpoints on public relations power, and separate instrumental and symbolic functions in decision making. Berger (2005) believes that practitioners enacting activist roles will open up the real pressures brought to bear by power relations experienced by practitioners, and force a rethink of the possibilities for public relations roles.

This discussion about power and influence raises questions about the possibility of public relations practitioners enacting leadership roles.

#### **4.5 Public relations and leadership**

While managerial roles have accounted for much of public relations roles research, very little attention has been given to public relations and leadership. Other than the Excellence Study by Grunig and his colleagues which mentioned leadership as one of the characteristics of an excellent organization (not a public relations practitioner per se), only three other studies have explored the notion of communication and public relations practitioners as leaders (Farmer et al., 1998; Aldoory, 1998; Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Many of the references to leadership and public relations are about public relations practitioners working for or working with the organization's leaders, rather than becoming one of the leaders. On the other hand, the leadership literature abounds with references to how leaders need to become excellent communicators (see for example, Barrett, 2006; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). This discrepancy in the

literature is quite significant in the context of exploring the public relations role firstly, as a conscience role, and secondly, as a leadership role.

While traditional thinking about leadership refers to people with positions of authority (Yukl, 1981; Fairhurst, 2001), recent views of leadership have evolved to refer to people “who provides a vision and influences others to realize it through non coercive means” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 15). Furthermore, while leadership has been seen as an exclusive role of top management, its definition as an “activity of a citizen from any walk of life mobilizing people to do something” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 20) has expanded the potential of other influential people to become leaders. The prevalence of cross-functional teams in contemporary organizations has led to leadership being determined by “an individual’s capacity to influence peers and by the needs of the team in any given moment” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. xi). As such, leadership is construed as an activity that is shared or distributed among members of a group or organization and thus, allows individuals to become leaders on some occasions and step back to let others lead (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. xi). Based on these definitions of leadership and their seeming influence in organizations, public relations and communication practitioners seem to fit the leadership criteria.

To find out whether this claim has any merit, the concept of leadership will be discussed. Then leadership within public relations scholarship will be examined. Finally, this section will explore if public relations/communication practitioners’ enactment of leadership roles or reporting to a transformational leader influences their enactment of a conscience role.

#### 4.5.1 Leaders do the “right” thing?

As suggested in Chapter 2, distinguishing leaders from managers implies that organizational leaders have the ability to become the conscience of the organization by focusing on ‘doing the right thing’. Organizational leaders are responsible for directing “followers towards achieving organizational purposes by articulating the organization’s mission, vision, strategy, and goals” and disseminating strategic organizational goals as well as “convincing constituents to effectively implement those goals” (Berson & Avolio, 2004, p. 626).

Whether the enactment of the conscience role is reflective of a transactional or transformational leadership role is also queried. Transactional leadership is characterised by an exchange relationship between the leader and the employees when the leader “explains what is required of them and what compensation they will get if they fulfil their requirements” (Bass, 1999, pp. 19-20). It also assumes that “improving communication will increase morale and motivation among the employees which in

turn will increase individual and organizational performance” (Conrad & Poole, 2005, p. 146). A transactional leader is described as someone who: uses rewards and recognition in exchange for performance, effort and accomplishment; identifies and addresses people who deviate from the rules and standards; intervenes only when those standards are not met; and relinquishes responsibility by avoiding decisions (Bass, 1990, p. 22).

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is described to occur when leaders are able to move followers beyond one’s self-interest. A transformational leader therefore is characterised as someone who: provides vision, mission and instills a sense of pride; communicates expectations in simple comprehensible terms; promotes intelligence, rationality and problem solving; and, is able to provide personal attention through coaching or mentorship (Bass, 1990, p. 22).

Transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration (Bass, 1999, p. 11).

Because both transactional and transformational leaders consider their employees and their needs and involve subordinates in decision making even “encouraging them to question basic assumptions of the organizations or units” and supervise their subordinates rather loosely, they involve similar communicative strategies (Conrad & Poole, 2005, p. 178). Despite these similarities however, it seems that transformational leadership is more akin to leaders who practise values-based management.

Transformational leaders usually articulate a strategic vision and guide followers to implement the vision and mission across the different levels of the organization. More importantly transformational leaders encourage their followers to “question assumptions, methods, and the goals to discover better ways of understanding and translating them in to specific actions and deliverables” (Berson & Avolio, 2004, p. 626).

To determine how these leadership concepts applied to public relations, Aldoory (1998) conducted interviews with 10 female public relations educators and practitioners, which revealed that most of the respondents demonstrated transformational or interactive leadership styles. The most common term the respondents used was ‘vision’ which “involved a coming together or building consensus” (p. 86). Furthermore, the respondents again referred to ‘vision’ as the distinguishing factor between managers and leaders. Later research by Aldoory with Toth (2004), which comprised a survey of 864 US public relations practitioners and six focus groups found that generally, respondents preferred a transformational leadership over a transactional leadership style. They found that public relations

practitioners normally operate in a turbulent environment where transformational leaders apparently thrive (McWhinney, 1997, cited in Aldoory & Toth, 2004).

Bass (1999) mentions three key factors in the development of a transformational leader—the organizational culture, one’s personal and moral development which emerges from influences out of one’s parents and school, and through training and education. If public relations and communication practitioners can be transformational leaders, it would be appropriate to ask whether these influences may also be relevant to the development of the conscience role among public relations practitioners. And the implication that transformational leadership can be learned through training and education suggests that the organizational conscience role may also be learned and developed through the same process.

#### 4.5.2 Organizational leadership roles and life cycle stages

Following Bass’s (1999) argument that organizational culture affects the development of the kind of leadership role, and that organizational culture is not static, Schein (1992) suggests that the stage in the organization’s life cycle also affects the leadership roles within the organization. Culture emerges from three sources: the beliefs, values and assumptions of the organization’s founders; the learning experiences of the organization’s members as it evolves; and, the new beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders (Schein, 1992, p. 211).

According to Schein (1992), the founder sets the leadership role in the early stages of an organization’s development. As such founders create the organization’s culture through their choice of mission and purpose. At this stage, leaders are expected to be strong-willed to impose their ideas on the business as they define the direction of the business and the cultural environment in which it should operate.

As the organization goes through its mid-life stage, leaders must acknowledge the existence of sub-cultures and integrating this diversity becomes more challenging. At this stage, “culture serves as an important anxiety-reducing function” (Schein, 1992, p. 377) so leaders are advised to be discerning of how culture can influence strategies and policies to achieve organizational goals.

Leaders of mature or declining organizations, according to Schein (1992) are best to have a detached, almost external view of the organization so that culture change can occur effectively. Leadership and organizational culture were usually linked primarily because of the symbolic nature given to

organizational leaders. However Morgan (1997) was quick to caution that the formal leaders, who in most instances includes the CEO, are not the only people who can create shared meaning. While admitting that the leader's position of power offers a "special advantage" in creating values, Morgan (1997) recognized that other people, perhaps public relations/communication practitioners, may also have this influence.

However, others are also able to influence the process by acting as informal opinion leaders or simply by acting as the people that they are. Culture is not something that can be imposed on a social setting. Rather it develops during the course of interaction (Morgan, 1997, p. 137).

The process of development and interactions may be part of the learning process within organizations.

#### 4.5.3 Learning and leadership

So how do leaders emerge? Public relations practitioners and educators responded that it was a mix of natural and acquired skills (Aldoory, 1998, p. 86). That all but two of the ten American respondents considered themselves leaders indicated that public relations practitioners and educators are starting to develop some sense of self expectations toward the leadership role (Aldoory, 1998). One even said she saw herself to be a change agent. However most of the respondents said that they did not aspire to be leaders, they just took on more responsibilities. But the respondents had different opinions on whether leadership was a learned skill or a natural trait, some thinking leaders are born, and others suggesting leadership training skills are acquired.

Schein (1992) contends that leaders of future organizations need to be "perpetual learners" who require the following attributes: 1) new levels of perception and insight of the world and of themselves; 2) extraordinary levels of motivation to withstand the pain of learning and change especially when loyalties are questioned; 3) emotional strength to manage their and their constituents' anxiety through organizational change; 4) new skills in analysing and changing cultural assumptions; 5) willingness and ability to involve others and allow participation; and, 6) ability to learn a new culture (Schein, 1992, pp. 391-392).

This follows Senge's (1999) assertion that in new "learning organizations", leaders take on 'subtler and more important' tasks as designers, stewards, and teachers (p. 340) However, he qualifies that the leader as teacher concept is not necessarily about teaching people but providing an environment where people have opportunities to learn (Senge, 1999, p. 356).



Furthermore, Schein (1992) emphasises the importance of being able to notice changes in the environment and figuring out how to address those changes to keep the organization adaptive (p. 382). By this definition, he asserts that while CEOs or other senior managers may not be able to fulfil this role, it would be advantageous to the learning organization if they were able to. Identifying the changes in the external and internal environment and developing responses to address those changes is also referred to as strategic planning—an activity presumably involving the public relations/communication practitioner.

#### 4.5.4 Leaders and morality

Another indicator of leadership is their morality. In the context of transformational leadership, moral agency is evaluated based on the individual's development level of conscience, degree of freedom and intention; while moral action is assessed based on ends sought, means employed and consequences (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 182).

Covey (2005) identifies conscience as one of the four traits that differentiate a leader who makes a difference for good or bad. He says, "When conscience governs, leadership endures and changes the world for good" (Covey, 2005, p. 4). In addition to vision, discipline and passion, conscience provides leaders with integrity and peace of mind rather than depending on their ego to control organizational relationships.

Hackman and Johnson (2004) in their book, *Leadership: A Communication Perspective*, discuss ethics and morality within the context of leadership. They cite Aristotle's virtues and contend that ethical leaders possess "deeprooted dispositions, habits, skills or traits of character that incline persons to perceive, feel, and act in ethically right and sensitive ways" (p. 326). And while they argued that leaders need courage, they also asserted that "courage is the most important virtue for followers" (p. 335). The authors cited Chaleff's (1995, cited in Hackman & Johnson, 2004) notion of 'courageous followership' which is a variation of Useem's (2001, cited in Hackman & Johnson, 2004) notion of 'leading up'. These terms suggest that individuals move beyond their assigned responsibilities, take charge when they see the need and persuade their superiors to support their efforts.

Similarly, ethical leadership is based on the "moral character of the leader, the ethical legitimacy of the values within the leader's vision, articulation and program, and the morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action" pursued and engaged in by leaders and their followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 182).

Leadership and morality are still concepts that need further study, albeit recent studies on spirituality in the workplace have started to discuss these relationships. What seems clear however is that leadership roles imply an ethical and moral agency and can be articulated through their enactment of the conscience role. Similarly, the question on whether the conscience role is learned or innate needs to be explored.

This discussion on leadership and the expectations of leaders, particularly that of transformational leaders doing the “right” thing, and the limited research on public relations as leaders, demonstrates the argument that public relations practitioners enacting a conscience role could potentially enact a leadership role, and conversely, that their enactment of a leadership role provides them the opportunity to enact a conscience role.

This section also demonstrates that except for a couple of articles by Aldoory (1998; with Toth, 2004), public relations scholarship has been so preoccupied with its managerial focus that it has neglected leadership roles for public relations practitioners. Furthermore, the limited discussions on leadership and public relations take the view of how public relations practitioners work with or under leaders, rather than thinking of public relations practitioners as organizational leaders.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter’s examination of the concepts of power, control, influence and leadership is critical to understanding the context in which the public relations practitioner can enact the organizational conscience role. While power has often been presented as a ‘dirty word’, this chapter’s discussion demonstrates how practitioners can use power and influence to do ‘the right thing’. However to exercise power and influence in a socially responsible way requires practitioners to develop their understanding of various tactics within an ethical and moral framework. The chapter also revealed how influence can result in an individual’s commitment to or compliance with the organization. Within the context of transformational leadership, communication practitioners have the capabilities to use their power bases and influence to enact an organizational conscience role. Moreover, the chapter explored how the concepts of concertive control and upward influence may impact on the practitioner’s involvement in organizational value setting. How Australian public relations and communication practitioners actually perceive their roles, power and influence during the organizational value-setting process will now be discussed in the succeeding chapters. The next chapter describes the methodology used to collect the data from the Australian communication practitioners.

## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

As the previous background chapters demonstrate, the organizational conscience role through its involvement in the organizational value-setting process presents a potential role for public relations/communication practitioners to pursue. However the extant literature provides very little empirical evidence that practitioners currently enact this role. As previously suggested, most literature still positions the organizational conscience role as an aspirational role. This research therefore examines whether Australian public relations/communication practitioners enact the organizational conscience role through the organizational value-setting process. If they don't, what other roles are they enacting? What individual or organizational factors affect the enactment of the roles they play? And how do power, control and influence affect the enactment of these roles within their organizations?

To address these questions, it was important to collect data from public relations and communication practitioners in Melbourne and Sydney. These questions required in-depth, and preferably, face-to-face interviews. Understanding the personal perspectives of the practitioners on the issues of the organizational conscience and their role in organizational value setting is integral to understanding the future roles of public relations and communication practitioners in 21<sup>st</sup> century practice.

This chapter will now detail the research approach and methodology. The first section describes the rationale for the research design and is then followed by an explanation of the sampling design. The next two sections elucidate the research instruments used in the collection of data, and the processes applied in data analysis. The last two sections explain the limitations of the study and applications of the tests for qualitative research, before a summary of the chapter.

### **5.2 Research design: Using in-depth interviews**

Identifying one's role in a process and within an organization requires an understanding of one's self-perceptions. As previously mentioned, how others perceive a person's role and the expectations which accompany that are somehow dependent on how the person understands and perceives his or her own role (Biddle, 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1966).

So in a study that explores a public relations/communication practitioner's role in organizational value setting, it is important to first ask the practitioners themselves through semi-structured in-depth

interviews. Furthermore, as earlier stated, roles are affected by the environmental context in which they are enacted. That the topic touches on business ethics also adds to the importance of providing data from people in a naturalistic setting.

The research approach used in this study combined elements of a positivist approach in trying to “describe what is currently occurring” and the interpretive approach which attempts to “understand how people in everyday natural settings create meaning and interpret the events of their world” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 103). Furthermore, the combination of interview notes and some observation is reflective of a form of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research scholars, from social science (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Babbie, 1998), communication (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000; Jensen & Jankowski, 1999; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), organizational fields (Lee, 1999), and public relations (Daymon & Holloway, 2002) have mentioned the importance of identifying a particular perspective in approaching one’s research. They suggest that the choice between an interpretive and a positivist worldview is important before one embarks on one’s research. Daymon and Holloway (2002) posit, “Your orientation to either an interpretive or realist worldview determines the type of research question you choose for your study and influences the type of investigative methods you select” (p. 4).

However, that implies an “either-or” cosmology not reflective of this research. It is both descriptive and interpretive, and it is both descriptive and interpretive of how the subjects “create meaning and interpret the events” as Wimmer and Dominick (2000, p. 3) put it. Lindlof and Taylor’s (2002, p. 19) category of qualitative research within the interpretive paradigm seems to provide the framework which combines both approaches that is more indicative of this current research’s design.

The use of in-depth interviews provides an empirical base from which this thesis develops its arguments. The interview data are then interpreted using what I have called a multiple perspectives lens. The thesis demonstrates that for the present purposes a single perspective approach would constrain the ability to explore important areas within the context of the research questions.

Analysing and discussing the interviews focussed more on understanding the meaning of the words provided than the numerical significance of the data. The use of scales was both to report descriptions of the respondents’ situation and, more importantly to validate the responses given to the open ended questions of the interview. The use of words to signify one’s perception and description of experiences

is a symbolic process and these words are informed by the respondents' individual backgrounds and meanings. At the same time, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the respondents' verbal and non-verbal communication and situated these meanings within the context of the site and the study (Bryman, 2001).

The study met the four considerations for qualitative research--local grounding, richness and holism, sustained period and causality, and lived meanings--proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994).

*Local grounding.* This refers to the importance of studying the site, participants and processes of a specific organization (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As this study interviewed public relations/communication practitioners within the organization about their roles and involvement in the strategic planning process specifically in setting organizational values, this consideration is met. This study asked participants to describe the processes by which organizational values are set, refined, and implemented. Of particular interest to this study is the nature of the influence of the public relations practitioner on two dimensions: toward management and toward non-management staff.

*Richness and holism.* This refers to the importance of depth and vivid and rich descriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As the topic of organisational values and consequently ethics relate to the nature of the study, the discussion and description of organizational culture by key staff lent valuable insights into the actual rather than the espoused values and behaviours of organizational members. The research also explored the triggers for organizational change within the context of how organizational values are revisited during an organization's renewal phase. The interviews provided the researcher with an understanding of the organizational structure, where the respondent was located in the table of organization for example, how the respondent described his or her organization's culture, how they described the process of strategic planning, and organizational value setting, how they perceived their influence within the organization, as well as who they thought should be involved in the organizational value-setting process. The richness of these detailed responses would only have been viable through in-depth interviews.

*Sustained period and causality.* This consideration asks the need for studying organizational processes over a lengthy period of time (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While this research does not involve observation of the organization subjects over time, it did ask the respondents to recall and describe changes within the organization that they may have experienced in the last ten years. If they were new to the organization, as a few of the respondents were, they were asked to recall their knowledge of the

process based on what they were told as part of their socialization process. This historical recollection and description aimed to find out whether the role or the perception of the role of public relations/communication practitioner has changed over time; and to what environmental factors might this change be attributed.

*Lived meanings.* This refers to the importance of individual perspectives, in particular how participants organise and structure their ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This consideration was the main reason why interviews with public relations/communication practitioners were undertaken. The individual's perspectives of their role in relation to the organizational process and structure were important in determining their existing as well as their potential functions. One of the useful insights in the interview process was to assess the assumptions that the respondents (as well as the researcher) had based on their responses. For example, one respondent referred to his role as how it should be the 'corporate conscience' without any prompts on my part.

Despite criticisms of interview data as being too subjective, difficult to replicate, problems of generalization and lack of transparency (Bryman, 2001), these seemed minor to the advantages of acquiring rich, sensitive and nuanced information from a select set of industry practitioners and their organizational contexts. Descriptions of the sampling process, the data gathering process and the questions used in this research address the issues of replication and transparency. While the sample of 30 respondents is small, it is more than sufficient in a study of this nature. The interviews actually resulted in more than 30 hours of transcribed text which provided a huge amount of data. Furthermore, qualitative research such as this one aims to generalize to the theory rather than to the population (Bryman, 2001).

Organizational scholar Morgan (1997) has suggested that one way to understand the nature of corporate culture and its subcultures is "to observe the day-to-day functioning of a group or organization to which it belongs, *as if one were an outsider* (p. 129)." He says that by observing organizations, "one becomes aware of the patterns on interaction between individuals, the language that is used, the images and themes explored in conversation, and the various rituals of daily routine (p. 130)." While this study did not focus on the respondents' organizational cultures, and did not require a daily observation of the organizational participants, it was useful to get a glimpse of the cultural context in which the respondents worked. Following this view, it was important when practicable to undertake the interviews at the premises of the respondent. Observing the physical surroundings of the organization as well as the other people present during that time provided some insights, albeit brief, as artefacts to the kind of

organizational culture being experienced. How the respondents related to their surroundings was also indicative of the way they 'lived' rather than merely 'espoused' their organizational culture. In this way, observing the respondents in the context of their organizational environment allowed me, an outsider, to see clearly what employees may take for granted.

### 5.2.2 In-depth interviews

Examining practitioners' perceptions of their roles in the organizational value-setting process required an understanding of the organizational contexts in which they work especially as they related to change. Furthermore in understanding their experience and reconstructing events in their organizations, the interviews with the respondents allowed an exploration of personal issues (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Because the nature of the research questions in this current study dealt with the respondents' descriptions, interpretations and explanation of processes and views on organizational behaviour, in-depth interviews were suitable (Lee, 1999).

On one level, the interviews were aimed at finding out the respondents' knowledge and involvement in a specific organizational process (value-setting). On another level, the interviews were useful in exploring the respondents' feelings, attitudes, opinions, beliefs and interpretations on organizational processes in their natural settings (Berger, 2000; Babbie, 1998; Lee, 1999). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews offered the researcher the opportunity to observe the non-verbal gestures, signs and physical environment to provide a context to the information being provided during the interviews.

Like most research inquiries involving organizational processes, respondents in this study were constrained by confidentiality clauses. However the interviews offered both the respondent and the researcher an opportunity to exchange ideas and in some instances, an opportunity to explore questions not previously considered by the respondent (Berger, 2000, p. 113). The respondents' confidentiality requirements were addressed in this research through promises of anonymity and use of pseudonyms, which also allowed the audio-recording of the interviews, the transcriptions of which were used in the data analysis.

The interviews also allowed both the researcher and interviewee an opportunity to clarify terms which may be unknown to both parties or to clarify assumptions both parties may have had about a particular terminology. Clarifying terms and assumptions occurred several times during the interviews and it was good to find out how each respondent interpreted their terms.

Establishing rapport during interviews was a critical feature. The personal interviews offered the respondents an opportunity to meet the researcher and assess my bonafides before the scheduled appointment. In some instances when I was meeting the respondents for the first time, I had to use “ice-breakers” and some basic questions at the start of the interviews particularly because of the sensitive nature of the research. However, contact by telephone and by email prior to the interviews helped start the rapport-building phase which led to the face-to-face meeting.

During the interviews, I was able to rephrase or restate the question when some respondents found the questions difficult. Similarly, when the respondent offered brief answers, I was able to probe further (Merrigan & Huston, 2004).

The interviews also allowed me to hear the voices of the respondents (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). What this means is that all the nuances of the interviewees’ responses were heard and recorded. For example, these nuances in responses included a long pause, a hearty sarcastic laugh, or arms across the chest. Similarly, some of the respondents’ extensive use of jargon, or extremely long-winded responses were recorded. Admittedly these nuances are interpreted subjectively by the researcher’s own bias which leads me to the next section on the disadvantages of interviews.

While interviews provide rich data and some flexibility in the data-gathering process, interviews have largely been criticised for their subjectivity and threats to external validity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). To address these issues, the interviews incorporated questions which were negatively worded, or were repeated in different forms, one in an open-ended form and the same question in a close-ended form.

Interviewers also require appropriate training to be able to extract the kind of information necessary for the study. As some respondents may digress from the subject matter or the question, a skilled interviewer needs to redirect the conversation back to track with as much diplomacy and tact to encourage the respondent to continue (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). My interviewing experience is drawn from previous research work as a communication student as well as my more than 20 years of professional experience as a public relations practitioner and academic. My experience in the professional and academic environments provided me with the confidence to be aware of potential bias in the tone, non-verbal gestures and manner of my questions as well as the respondents’ answers.



Despite the use of a semi-structured interview guide, each interview was different in how the respondents interpreted the question and subsequently in how they provided the response. The variances however were very little given that the respondents have very similar backgrounds and were occupying fairly similar roles within their respective organizations.

The focus on the individual practitioner was important in gaining a sense of reality of the practitioner in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Heath, 2000; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000).

Several public relations scholars (Terry, 2001; Bowen, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004; O'Neil, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) have recently used qualitative in-depth interviews in their studies on public relations ethics and public relations roles. For example, Bowen (2000) undertook elite interviewing for her doctoral dissertation on ethics. She interviewed issues managers and combined these elite interviews with participant observation and document analysis as part of her comparative case study of two US-based pharmaceutical companies. Terry (2001) on the other hand, used an interpretive approach in her interviews with 37 former and current lobbyists from Texas. Using data gathered from interviews and applying Burke's notion of human motivations with Broom and Smith's early typology, she came up with a typology of seven roles. Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) interviewed public relations practitioners in Florida and proposed an organizational activist role after applying a postmodern approach to analyse their data by focusing on micropolitical processes and the production of dissensus (p. 64).

In the same way that personal or face-to-face interviews are highly appropriate methodology in studying ethical decision-making in organization (Liedtka, 1992, cited in Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 308), they are equally appropriate when examining individual's roles in an organizational process. Because of the sensitivity of questions relating to ethics and values, one technique is to pose questions to the interviewees about others in the organization (Treviño & Weaver, 2003). This tactic allows anonymity and neutrality and the interviewees do not feel that they have to 'defend' a position. This tactic was applied in the current research when interviewees were asked to identify the people involved in the process. As the interview went along and a certain level of comfort and trust with the interviewer was established, the questions eventually focussed on the interviewee's individual role.

One of the important things to consider in research using personal interviews such as this one, and specifically to ethics-related research, is to discern what is not being said (Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 309). Understanding what is not verbalized but implied by the interviewee either in their indirect

response or their body language was extremely important and required a sensitivity and perceptiveness on the part of the interviewer. Furthermore, because this research also explored the very sensitive issues of power, control and influence, these insights had to be extracted by reading between the lines of the interviewees' responses.

In weighing the advantages over the disadvantages of interviews, the wealth of detail as well as the richness of the information in such a topic as organizational values and organizational processes extracted from in-depth interviews still made it the most appropriate methodology for this study.

### **5.3 Sampling design: Purposive sampling**

Because the study is about exploring public relations and communication practitioners' involvement in the organizational value-setting process, it was important that certain criteria were met on two levels—of the organizations in the study, and of the respondents representing those organizations. For these reasons, the study used a combined purposive and quota sampling design. Purposive sampling is used when individuals representing certain criteria are deemed appropriate to provide knowledge and experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The criteria established for this study is that the organizations have a published vision/mission/value statement on their websites, that they are located in Australia, that they are either a corporate or a government institution, and that they have a communication practitioner who was willing to participate in the study.

The communication practitioners who participated were not necessarily required to be responsible for value setting but needed to have some understanding and knowledge of the process and the organization to ensure a productive interview.

The size of the sample was also determined based on informational considerations which meant that adding more subjects will not provide new information to the study, or what is also referred to as 'informational redundancy' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

A total of 30 in-house public relations/communication practitioners participated in the research, representing 26 medium- to large-sized organizations in Melbourne and Sydney. These practitioners were identified through the following process. I had earlier decided to interview in-house corporate communication practitioners (as against consultants or practitioners from not for profit organizations) to

narrow down the demographic and make a more meaningful comparison within a particular group. This decision was made to enable the study to narrow its applications to a certain group of practitioners. Furthermore, consultants will have a different level of involvement with in-house practitioners because consultants are usually hired for specific projects. Because most not-for-profit organizations are established for specific causes and may thereby have a different view to organizational culture and values, including their responses might have distorted the findings.

To collect this sample, the membership list of the International Association of Business Communicators was accessed in late 2004. Using its electronic membership directory, I then selected the members from Victoria and New South Wales, isolating those who represented corporations. From this list of companies, I then accessed each company's website to assess whether the company has a published list of organizational values—which may include the vision, mission and values statements or whatever terminology the companies used to refer to them. Once this criterion was met, the name and contact details of the association member were noted for telephone contact.

After the initial contact was made, I sent the prospective participant a copy of the plain language statement (Appendix 1) which described the details of the study, and when the initial contact resulted in a positive indication, an interview appointment date was made. Most of those contacted accepted but some declined due to work demands on their time. Many practitioners who were approached viewed that participation in an academic research was not a priority in their already heavy workload. When practitioners responded in this manner, I suggested meeting them outside of their work hours, either for lunch or coffee or after hours. When put in this manner, some eventually relented. Except for four respondents, the rest of the respondents had no prior contact or acquaintance with me. This cold contact approach in some ways had its merits in that the I had no prior knowledge of the respondent or the workings of the organization until the interview process. This provided me with a fresh and open-minded approach to the information. While trust might have been an issue especially for the respondents with whom I have not had prior contact, my credentials as a university academic and a member of the IABC provided the respondents with an opportunity to build their trust in me (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 92).

When the IABC membership list was exhausted and the number of participants has not yet met the desired quota, I accessed the membership list of the Business Council of Australia (BCA). The BCA is an association whose members comprise Chief Executive Officers of the largest organizations in Australia, both local and multinational. The membership list was accessed through the BCA website in

early 2005. The BCA membership list had hot links to the home pages of each organization that was on that list. This list was accessed twice in 2005 with the members increasing within a few months. At the time of the access, there were a total of 80 members on that list. Because of the hot links to the member companies' homepages, it was easy to check whether the company had a published set of values—again including vision, mission, values statements and/or codes of conduct or ethics—and its variations. The Melbourne based companies were given priority although the Sydney companies were also considered if required later.

Approaching the companies by mentioning their affiliations with professional associations seemed to have helped gain their trust in the research and the researcher. Moreover, sending them the Plain Language Statement (Appendix 1) on RMIT letterhead, ensuring confidentiality, and confirming that the research was for academic purposes further encouraged the respondents' participation.

#### **5.4 Data gathering**

Data collection occurred between May 2004 and May 2005, mostly during the October-November 2004 time period and then again from February-May 2005 in Melbourne and Sydney. Of the 30 respondents, one interview was undertaken by telephone, and one self-administered the questionnaire (after being unable to attend the interview due to work commitments) which was later returned to the researcher by post. While the telephone interview did not provide me the opportunity to visually observe the respondent, I was able to ask probe questions when required. While the self-administered questionnaire did not offer as much depth and context as the personal interviews, the responses were still valuable not only because the respondent answered all the applicable questions, but also because the practitioner was a senior communication executive who reported to the Managing Director of a government body. At the start of each interview, the respondents were: reminded of the aim of the study as described in the Plain Language Statement letter (Appendix 1); asked their consent by signing the Consent Form (Appendix 2); and asked their consent to audio tape the interview.

In two organizations, two respondents attended the interview together. Interestingly on both these occasions, one of the participants was of the Executive General Manager (EGM) rank, who reported directly to the CEO. The second member of staff was the EGM's subordinate. During these times, the questions were initially directed to the higher ranking participant for a couple of reasons.

In the first case, the subordinate who was familiar with the researcher had been in the company for only six months while his boss had been at the company longer. The subordinate in this instance suggested to include the EGM to ensure that questions about the process that would have occurred before he started

employment there were adequately answered. However, the subordinate would also answer some of the questions when individual points of view were asked. In some instances, the superior deferred to the subordinate to get a response.

In the second instance, the EGM was the first point of contact through an earlier referral by the researcher's colleague. This time, the subordinate was brought in because the EGM could only stay for 30 minutes. For this case, questions were first asked of the EGM until her departure, and a subsequent interview was undertaken with the subordinate.

These paired interviews offered a fascinating observation into the superior-subordinate relationship although this angle is not the focus of this research. Suffice it to say, as expected, the subordinate often deferred to the superior. While these two circumstances were not ideal because of the dynamics that occur with other people compared to individual interviews, and the potential for a less than honest answer or a less than candid comment, the opportunity to access a participant at EGM level was too good to pass up, so these limitations were put under consideration.

#### 5.4.1 Instrument: Semi-structured interview guide

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed because the research had an overarching topic, key themes and specific questions which needed to be asked in a particular order. Furthermore, because of the nature of the research topic, it was important to provide the respondents with an opportunity to focus on their understanding or meaning of particular concepts and or experience. The interview format allowed them to expand their answers and the researcher to ask additional and follow up questions (Merrigan & Huston, 2004). Discussing organizational culture and more specifically organizational values can generate very personal and emotional views which required the face-to-face (or telephone) interview so the researcher can include the visual and aural cues from the conversation. It was important to ask the respondents' individual experience and involvement in different types of organizational processes (Lee, 1999). At the same time the semi-structured interview also provides the balance and direction to keep the questions and answers on track.

The interview guide comprised open-ended and closed-ended questions. Some questions required multiple choice prompts to guide the respondent to answer.

The interview guide had two versions, the first one was used with the first five respondents (Appendix 3). After the initial interviews, the researcher realised some questions needed to be included and they

were then added to the final version of the questionnaire (Appendix 4). The additional questions were emailed to the respondents already interviewed. Unfortunately, not all of them returned their additional responses.

The final version of the research instrument comprised six parts. A total number of 55 questions comprised the interview guide excluding the optional section on demographic information.

Part A asked information about the organization, the industry to which it belongs, the ownership structure of the company, when the organization was established, organizational size based on the number of employees. This section also asked the respondents if their organization underwent recent change, the nature of the changes, the triggers for the change, and then went on to ask how they describe their organizational culture.

Part B asked the respondents about their role. In particular, questions about their title, how long they've been in that role, who they reported to, and how many staff report to them, if any, and their key responsibilities. Questions on influence drawn from O'Neil's (2004) study were incorporated in this section.

Part C included questions on strategic planning processes to establish if they were involved in them and if value setting was considered part of the strategic planning process in their respective organizations.

Part D asked about their organizational values. Part E inquired about the organizational value-setting process. Part F included questions on demographic data which were optional.

#### 5.4.2 The interview process

The face-to-face interviews lasted between 40 to 180 minutes but the average interview lasted an hour. Most of the interviews were undertaken at the respondents' place of work. Some of the interviews were held over lunch or coffee which in one way offered the researcher and respondent a more relaxed environment to talk freely about the company.

Because the study touches on organizational culture, it was important for the researcher to visit the sites of the companies under study to get a context of the organizational environments in which the respondents operated. For the interviews undertaken within company premises, the interviews were held either in the respondent's office (10), a meeting room (7) or the company coffee shop/canteen (7). For interviews conducted outside company premises, these were usually held in a nearby restaurant or

coffee shop (4) but each time, the interviewer met with the respondent first at the respondent's workplace. The researcher was able to observe, albeit briefly, the premises of the respondent who didn't attend the interview because the researcher was already at the office when the interviewee cancelled the appointment. The researcher wasn't able to observe the premises of one respondent who participated in a telephone interview.

Interviews have often been described as conversations (Lee, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). More specifically, they have been described as conversations with a purpose (Berger, 2000). The interviews undertaken for this research used semi-structured instruments to guide the course of the interview. According to Rubin & Rubin (2005) the choice of "conversational partners" or interviewees who are knowledgeable and experienced on the research topic lends credibility to the interviews (p. 64). As mentioned earlier, before the respondents were chosen, they were asked about their knowledge and understanding about the value-setting process and only after this filtering process were appointments made to schedule interviews. In the course of the interviews, it became clear that most of them knew the process but were not involved in the process. So the respondents became informants of the process which they may have either experienced or heard about from others. There were also two respondents who said they were not directly involved in the process but were willing to provide their perspectives anyway.

In assessing the interviewee's knowledge about the topic, the interviews started with basic introductory questions about the organization—its size, its structure, changes that may have occurred and why, culture (Lee, 1999). Then to ascertain the role the interviewee had in the process, I asked questions about his/her role, reporting relationships and who they interact with and what the nature of the interactions were. From then I moved on to ask about the strategic planning process, and who were the people involved, if they were involved, before moving on to the value-setting process questions. Some respondents actually mentioned the value-setting process as part of the strategic planning process so that question was not repeated. Others needed reiteration.

As mentioned previously, it is important to build trust between the interviewer and the respondents especially as most of my respondents had never met me before. To further establish their trust in me and my research, the promises of confidentiality and anonymity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pp. 97-104) were critical to their candour and honesty during the interview. Pseudonyms were used in the thesis to protect the identities of the respondents. I also mentioned I will not make references to them or their companies that will make them identifiable and these were indicated on the consent forms which we

both signed before beginning the interviews. Furthermore, permission to audiotape was requested as a memory aid and as a sign of respect and courtesy (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 110-112).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) mention the importance of depth and detail, vividness, nuance and richness during the interview. The interviews conducted attempted to get as much of those facets as much as time and context allowed. Perhaps the number of questions in the interview guide may have constrained attempts at asking for more depth, given that I was conscious of the time allocated to me, the fairly extensive answers including some examples given by some of the respondents offered a lot of detail.

By combining follow up and probe questions with the main questions, the interview process provided a comprehensive amount of data which now required analysis to gain an understanding of the respondents' views and to some extent, feelings on the subject.

#### 5.4.3 Supplementary data collection

As mentioned earlier in the sampling process, the organizations were chosen initially using their company websites' inclusion of organizational value statements. The pages from these websites as well as supplementary material provided by some respondents such as annual reports, corporate videos, samples of collateral materials featuring their values, were examined as part of this research. While these were useful in providing the context, and understanding the focus of the practitioner's role (as a manager or as a technician, for example), reporting the respondents' own involvement in the process remained the major thrust of this research.

In the same manner, the observation notes taken during the interviews were used again as a contextual aid in understanding how the respondent's organization placed a focus on organizational values. For example, one company featured the key words of their organizational values on the front wall of their company foyer just next to the main reception desk. Or if the computer screen savers featured the organizational values, as some participating organizations did. So the researcher's observations were used to validate the claims put forth by the respondents during the interviews.

Other elements noted during the observation phase were the office layouts—whether they were open plan, location of the CEO's office relative to the communication practitioner and staff, as well as the 'reception experience'. While these were not directly related to the research question, they gave the researcher an overall feel of the organization's culture.



## **5.5 Data analysis**

Transforming raw data to “evidence-based interpretations” is referred to as the data analysis process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 201). It involves ‘classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining material from the interviews to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative’ (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 201). The analysis of the data went through several phases—the cleaning, the coding, and thematic analysis.

### 5.5.1 Data cleaning and coding

The first phase involved cleaning and coding the data. Each of the interviews was transcribed from notes taken on the interview guides and the audiotapes which recorded the interviews. Each respondent was given a pseudonym and the responses to all the questions as well as my additional notes and memos were put together in a document filed under that respondent’s codename. After all the interviews were transcribed, the responses were grouped according to the questions so all the respondents’ answers to the questions were on a table to facilitate comparative analysis. These two documents were labelled codebook—for the individual transcriptions; and data – for the data grouped according to the question/s. The questions that included a Likert scale were put into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the means were calculated. The next phase involved coding similar themes that emerged from the responses for that same question.

Coding involves the “systematic labelling of concepts, themes, events, and topical markers to allow for easy retrieval of data across the data set” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 207). For example, when the respondents described their organization’s value-setting process, they were coded either top down, bottom up, participative. The top down referred to when the values were developed and generated by the CEO’s office including the senior leadership, the bottom up referred to a process involving the front line and junior people going up; while the participative referred to a representative from every business unit and every level being involved.

Following from Lindlof and Taylor (2002), two kinds of coding were used. The first is called open coding which is when each line of the interview transcripts and notes were analysed and noted and marked to suggest a category (p. 219). Open coding “open(s) up the inquiry. Every interpretation at this point is tentative...” (Strauss, 1987, cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 219). These coding techniques revealed several themes within each of the questions, and which were then integrated as required.

As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, coding can be done during the early stages of data collection. Because the data were manageable, manual coding was used for this study. Furthermore, this research used memos as an additional form of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72) to assist in the conceptualisation of the work. Quoting Glaser, a memo is defined as “the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding...it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages...” (1978, cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72).

Because the unit of analysis of the research is the enactment of roles during the organizational value-setting process, the enactment of roles is operationalised by the kind of activities performed by the practitioner during the different stages of the value-setting process. Other operational factors for the role enactment includes the practitioners’ level of involvement, their self-perceived level and span of influence, their self-perceived value to the organization, and their membership in the dominant coalition.

#### 5.5.2 Data analysis techniques used

Looking for patterns and themes from the texts was a major data analysis technique used in this research especially because of the number of participants and the number of questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the initial analysis, the themes that emerged seemed fairly obvious as the major concept initially being explored was that of corporate conscience. However after several readings of the data and reading of additional literature, the themes emerged more distinctly. Once the various perspectives were engaged with the data, the concepts and the responses provided interesting insights.

The data analysis process used an iterative approach. After the initial analysis on the seemingly ‘obvious’ interpretations, it was necessary to go back to the transcripts and the codebook to ‘read’ the data several times. In this manner, interpreting and analysing the data provided a more meaningful and more considered treatment. In some instances, significant examples not included in the first analysis were retrieved. Furthermore, when the first analysis included patterns of significance because many practitioners shared the same view, the succeeding analysis also looked at the responses which did not fall into the ‘norm’. The exceptions to the rule were also analysed and interpreted as they often provided a useful contrast to demonstrate the complexity and variety in responses of a fairly homogenous group of respondents.

The data were also subjected to clustering and counting (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The clustering technique was especially useful when analysing stages in a process to identify in which stage the

practitioner was directly involved or when respondents described their key responsibilities. Counting how many practitioners responded in similar or variant ways was extremely helpful in identifying patterns and themes. For example, to know the number of respondents who actually said they were involved in organizational value-setting as against those who admitted not being involved is critical to this study. Furthermore, determining the average agreement with Likert-scale statements was useful in validating some of the responses in the open ended questions.

As the data were analysed, some new themes not initially considered emerged. For example, the notions of agency vis-à-vis the manager/technician dichotomy, as well as the compliance and control constructs arose after engagement with the data. As such, contrasts and comparisons were made across the respondents' answers to certain questions and these were then grouped based on some dimensions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These dimensions included some of the variables earlier suggested (individual and organizational factors).

To summarise, the enormous amount of data gathered in this research required data reduction techniques so that they can make sense. After cleaning and coding the data, patterns and themes were found, clustered and counted, compared and contrasted, and eventually developing a typology.

## **5.6 Research limitations**

As most semi-structured interviews suggest (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), this research aimed to ask the respondents the same research questions primarily for consistency and ease in comparing the data. However, as mentioned earlier, after the first four interviews were conducted, the researcher discovered certain questions needed to be added which were not on the original version of the interview guide. Furthermore, while every attempt was made to focus on key questions on the interview guide, it was inevitable that additional questions were asked of some respondents depending on how they responded. This opportunity to follow up points picked up from the responses sometimes provided a richness not previously planned for. While this could be seen as a limitation, it could also be viewed as acceptable in using semi-structured interview designs.

Another major limitation of the study was the sample. Initially the study hoped to access organizational members from all levels other than the communication practitioner. Getting the views of other organizational members to assess how the communication practitioner's role is within the organizational context would have provided a richer understanding of the public relations/communication practitioner's role from other employees' viewpoints. It would also have

addressed the criticism that most public relations roles research is based on the practitioners' self-reports. However, since the initial sample plan caused delays in data gathering, primarily because of difficulties in finding organizations which would agree to give access, the researcher decided to change the sample. This problem of access is similar to the issues mentioned by Weaver and Treviño (2003) when attempting to access employees within an organization. For this study, two companies had initially agreed to participate but negotiations fell through once the detail and extent of employee participation was clarified. After months of negotiation, both company contacts eventually said that their companies had 'more important' business priorities.

In lieu, communication practitioners were contacted and asked to self-report on their roles and perceived influence in the organization. Many scholars have already critiqued this approach to public relations/communication research (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 180; Moss & Green, 2001; Johnson, 1989, p. 244) because of the very challenges associated with self-reports and self-perceptions. However, because no other study has examined the role of public relations/communication practitioners in organizational value setting, it is appropriate to establish the practitioners' perceptions first, and subsequent research may examine others' perceptions of the roles found in this study. Furthermore, as previously stated, in applying Rokeach's belief-attitude-value system, it is important to first focus on one's self-concept (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 140).

While some (Johnson, 1989) may view this self-reporting as "typical" of the criticism levelled against existing public relations roles research, the interview process allowed for follow-up questions. The follow-up questions were used to validate or clarify the respondents' answers especially when some contradictions to earlier statements or published statements occurred. Furthermore, to address the concerns about self-reports, I follow Cheney and Christensen's (2001) cautionary advice not to take them at face value. In this regard, the responses were analysed for why the respondents said what they said, and equally to what they did *not* say.

The homogeneity of the sample was also a limitation. The Australian practitioners represented in this study reflect a fairly narrow demographic—Anglo-Saxon, predominantly Christian, middle class, educated and well paid individuals. As Bernstein's theory of elaborated and restricted codes suggests, the language people use is reflective of social class systems (cited in Littlejohn, 1999). Whether they use an elaborated or restricted code largely depends on the openness of their system. In open-role systems, roles are negotiated and are more individualised and are therefore prone to more elaborate codes unlike in closed-role systems where roles are pretty set. The Australian society is fairly pluralistic

and its focus on the individual allows for different ways of expression. As such, the values of the respondents and their organizations can be fairly homogeneous.

The research also acknowledges a limitation regarding the practitioner's perspective of the researcher being a person 'external' to the organization which relates to the issue of role enactment by the communication practitioners. Because the respondents were public relations/communication practitioners, they tended to use the first person plural ('we') in some of their responses. Since their roles as organizational spokespersons seem to become second nature to them, the respondents tended to think of responses "on behalf of the organization" they represent, rather than their own as individual practitioners. Once this phenomenon became apparent during the course of the interview, I usually addressed it by restating the question, or following up the question to ask them about their own individual viewpoint.

Another limitation is the possibility of social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is "the tendency of individuals to respond in a way that minimizes socially undesirable traits and maximizes desirable ones" (Treviño & Weaver, 2003, p. 305), which apparently is a common challenge in most business ethics research. This limitation was addressed in several ways. One was to phrase some of the questions in the negative, as in one of the questions that used a scale. Another way was to rephrase the same question in a different manner. For example, the respondents were asked whether they were involved in organizational value setting in Question 48. In Question 49, their specific involvement was again asked. And in Question 50 they were asked who they know were involved in the organizational value-setting process. Another way was to put the question in the third person or ask how others in the organization might view them, which minimises the opportunity for them to be defensive or self-promoting. While it may seem that communication practitioners are naturals at promoting themselves and their organizations, the nature of the research question on organizational value setting actually did not fall into their 'usual scope of persuasive activities' so social desirability was not really a major concern. Moreover, the offer of anonymity of the individual's and organization's identities would have addressed this concern. Being anonymous allowed the respondents to be less guarded about how their responses will be perceived, especially in relation to their organizations, and their roles as organizational spokespersons. As a result, the respondents were more relaxed, and candid during the interview.

## **5.7 Tests for qualitative research**

To address the criticisms that qualitative research is subjective and unverifiable, certain tests were applied to this study. Using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness framework, this study applied certain strategies to ensure it was credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

### 5.7.1 Credibility/Validity

Credibility corresponds to what is known as internal validity in the quantitative approach. In the traditional sense, validity is often referred to as the "degree to which an observation measures what it is supposed to" (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 25). One way to address this is the use of triangulation methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Triangulation 'involves the comparison of two or more forms of evidence with respect to an object of research interest' (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 240). For this study, while the interview data were the primary focus of research, they were supplemented with field notes gained from observations of the respondents' premises, an analysis of their documents and websites, and memos to myself. Multiple sources of information allowed me to distinguish between the verbal data, as retrieved from the interview transcripts, and the observations, as reflected in the field notes. Discovering the inconsistencies or disjuncture between what is said (espoused) and what is done (actual) is an important part of validating the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 242).

The interview guide also integrated closed-ended Likert-scale questions with the predominantly open-ended questions. This technique allowed for validating some of the perceptions of the practitioners. For example, to ascertain the practitioner's perception of his or her relationship with the CEO and senior management, open ended questions were used to ask their reporting relationships, and a series of Likert-scale statements were asked to ascertain the practitioner's participation in the dominant coalition.

The interview schedule was also pretested among several practitioners and adjusted for the final draft. This step was useful in finetuning the instrument to ensure that the questions asked were clear and that additional questions were inserted. However because they were semi-structured interviews, there were additional questions which were asked of the respondents which may not have been on the final draft of the interview guide.

### 5.7.2 Transferability/Generalizability

Transferability is similar to the concept of generalizability. However because of the purposive sampling used in qualitative research such as this one, the issue of generalizability is in question. It may also refer

to the issue of representativeness (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Transferability refers to the ‘ability to transfer insights from one study to other settings, participants or text’ ((Merrigan & Huston, 2004, p. 72). To ensure that this study was transferable and representative, the number of cases was set at 30, which is a fairly reasonable number for multiple case qualitative studies. Furthermore, the use of two membership lists (IABC Australia and Business Council of Australia) as sampling frames provided a sense of ‘randomness’ from which the final respondents were selected. In addition, respondents who admitted to not being involved in organizational value setting were also included to provide contrasting cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 265).

To strengthen the possibility that these research findings would be generalizable to Australian in-house practitioners, the sample represented in-house practitioners from both corporate and government institutions.

### 5.7.3 Dependability/Reliability

Dependability is similar to the concept of reliability. Dependability refers to the consistency of the process over time and over different settings (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278; Lee, 1999, p. 146). What this implies is that the research would provide some consistency in results when repeated in other situations. Lee (1999) argues however that the notion of reliability should not be applied to the data gathering methods or to the instruments but rather to the “properties of the scores’ inferences” (p. 147). By this, he means that the “scores” which would refer to the interviewee’s comments and/or researcher’s observations will be consistent and stable. Consistency is achieved if the research interviews and/or observations are repeatable in similar conditions. Stability on the other hand is achieved when the researcher’s interpretation of the interview responses based on the political context is fairly constant.

For this research study, reliability is achieved because it uses a semi-structured interview instrument. And while it is acknowledged that organizations undergo change quite regularly and quickly, the general political, economic and social environments in which these organizations operate are still generally stable.

In this research, the questions posed to the respondents are fairly straightforward, including the probes and follow up questions. Because the interview guide is organised into clear sections, it also provides the interviewer with a flexibility to move across the different sections and still ask the same questions. The observations the researcher makes will be coloured by one’s background but if the focus is on

artefacts of organizational culture (eg size of lobby, colour schemes, office atmosphere) then the observational framework can provide the reliability required.

#### 5.7.4 Confirmability/Objectivity

Confirmability relates to the objectivity of the research. It refers to the ability for the data to be confirmed by independent persons (Lee, 1999). While it is acknowledged that there may have been cultural variables at play in this research not only organizationally but linguistic, professional and personal differences, the general methods and procedures for undertaking the study are explicitly described (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). For example, there will be nuances in the Australian English language with which only Australians would be familiar. Will they be understood and interpreted in the US or Canada? Furthermore, my background as a Filipino-Australian academic interpreting corporate Australia's responses under a Liberal Party Government will play a part in the interpretation of the data. Undoubtedly, context plays a major role in qualitative research as well as the awareness and explicit declaration of one's assumption is an important factor in interpretive research. As Lee (1999, p. 148) states, 'external reliability' is about the "shared systematic variance between a researcher's phenomenon of interest and its scored measurement" and as such, this definition can as well apply to this qualitative research study.

### **5.8 Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology for gathering and analysing data necessary to explore the roles that public relations/communication practitioners enact in organizational value setting. As discussed, self-concepts through self-reports by practitioners are important to ascertain their own perceptions in the non-traditional organizational value-setting role. In-depth interviews with in-house public relations and communication practitioners from Melbourne and Sydney, supplemented with observation and document analysis, provided a wealth of data in understanding the complexities of the individual practitioner within large government and corporate institutions.

In examining the roles of public relations/communication practitioners in organizational value setting, it was important to gather the individual and organizational contexts given the complexity of contemporary corporate environments. Despite seemingly focusing on a fairly homogenous group of respondents to participate in this research, the organizations represented in this study come from different industries, with different structures and cultures.



The use of in-depth interviews provided the nuances and contexts of the roles, functions, levels and nature of involvement and influence, of the public relations/communication practitioner in an organizational process such as value setting. Furthermore, the researcher was able to ask sensitive questions about power, control and influence which provides a more holistic understanding to add to the existing predominantly quantitative public relations roles research.

After subjecting the data to data analysis techniques, such as thematic and pattern analysis, counting and clustering, and testing for credibility and transferability, the results of the study are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

### 6.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter indicated, examining the roles enacted by public relations and communication practitioners in organizational value setting required data to be gathered through in-depth interviews, supplemented by field notes observed in some of the respondents' workplaces, and analysis of corporate communication material and websites. The decision to focus on the process of developing organizational values instead of the content of the organizational values statements themselves resulted in a supplementary use of the corporate communication material and websites.

To understand the respondents' views of their role in organizational value setting, the results of the in-depth interviews are presented in this chapter. The interviews covered background information on the organizations, the individual practitioner's roles, their perceptions of the organizational value-setting process, participation in the dominant coalition, their influence in the organization, and the dominant coalition's perceptions of their value as practitioners. In particular, this chapter presents the respondents' involvement in the organizational value-setting process.

The first section of this chapter includes the descriptive analysis of the respondents' profiles and the organizational profiles to provide a context for the study's respondents. The rest of the chapter details the results of the interviews and is organized according to key themes that emerged from the analysis. To establish the context and illustrate the variances in respondents' answers, distribution tables and numeric means are presented where appropriate, which are then elaborated by 'voices' of the respondents. Direct quotes from the respondents were included as appropriate to provide the flavour, texture and 'reality' of the interview responses, (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 252).

### 6.2 Respondents' profiles

To provide a context for the practitioners' responses, and provide a basis for later cross tabulation, the respondents were asked to complete a section about their demographic background. Because some of the questions may be deemed too personal, responding to this section was optional. Most were happy to complete the section except for one who completed some items but not all. As mentioned earlier, pseudonyms are used to protect the respondents' identities.

### 6.2.1 Gender and Age

As mentioned, a total of 30 communication practitioners participated in the research, representing 26 companies. As Table 6.1 shows, the 30 respondents comprised 22 female and 8 male practitioners. Their titles ranged from senior manager to Executive General Manager (EGM), the latter position being occupied by four women. As General Managers (GM) or EGMs, they are members of the top management team and reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Managing Director (MD). While this finding seemed to contradict previous research findings about gender differences and the manager-technician typology (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Lauzen, 1991; Creedon, 1991; Toth et al., 1998; DeSanto & Moss, 2004), not all the respondents were the top or most senior communication professionals in the organization. Some of the male and female respondents indicated reporting to a male superior.

*Table 6.1 Distribution of respondents by gender*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Female</b>	22	73
<b>Male</b>	8	27
<b>Total</b>	30	100

The respondents in this study reflected a fairly youthful group despite the seniority of their roles and position titles. As Table 6.2 shows, despite the respondents belonging between the 25-34 age to the 55-64 age brackets, half of them reported to be between 35-44 years old. Three respondents who reported their ages within the 55-64 age bracket include two males, and one female but none held GM or EGM titles.

*Table 6.2 Distribution of respondents by age range*

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>18-24</b>	0	0
<b>25-34</b>	5	17
<b>35-44</b>	15	50
<b>45-54</b>	5	17
<b>55-64</b>	3	10
<b>65+</b>	0	0
<b>NA</b>	2	6
<b>Total</b>	30	100

### 6.2.2 Position Titles

As mentioned previously, the titles by which practitioners go by indicate several things—one of which is the worldview regarding public relations and communication. Table 6.3 shows the different areas and divisions of the 30 respondents. The position titles were removed to protect the identities of the respondents. However the position titles ranged from manager, to director, to executive general manager. What the summary highlights is the absence of the phrase ‘public relations’ in all the areas/divisions in which the respondents belong. The table also shows that the most popular terminology used to refer to the division or area is ‘corporate affairs’ (6), followed closely by ‘internal communication’ (5), and ‘public affairs’ (4) and ‘communication’ (4).

*Table 6.3 Summary of respondents’ areas/divisions*

<b>Areas/divisions</b>	<b>Number</b>
<i>Corporate Affairs</i>	6
<i>Internal Communication</i>	5
<i>Public Affairs</i>	4
<i>Communication</i>	4
<i>Marketing Communication &amp; Strategy Development</i>	3
<i>Communication &amp; Community Relations</i>	2
<i>Change Communication</i>	2
<i>Corporate Communication</i>	1
<i>External Affairs</i>	1
<i>Special Projects</i>	1
<i>Government Relations</i>	1
<i>Total</i>	30

### 6.2.3 Income Range

The communication practitioners in this study were well paid with most of them earning more than \$100,000 a year. In fact, the demographic section of the interview guide had to be revised because the initial salary categories started at a very low scale and was irrelevant to this occupation. So a higher end category was added after the tenth interview, to include an additional income range of \$200,000 and above. Table 6.4 however shows that more three quarters of the respondents earned over \$100,000 a year. Of the 20 respondents whose interview schedules had been modified to reflect the additional bracket of \$200,000, four (4) reported to be in that category. However these four are not even EGMs, which implies that there could have been more in the highest category as the two EGMs used the earlier

version of the interview schedule. The third EGM did not respond to this question but because her subordinate reported already being in the \$200,000 income bracket, it is reasonable to assume she earned a higher salary.

*Table 6.4 Distribution of respondents by annual income*

<b>Income Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Below \$40,000	0
\$40,000-59,999	0
\$60,000-79,999	1
\$80,000-99,999	4
\$100,000-199,999	19*
\$200,000 & above	4
No answer	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

*\*Seven of these respondents ticked the bracket “\$100,000 and above” in the earlier version of the interview schedule, so it is possible that some of them really belong in the next (higher) category.*

#### 6.2.4 Educational Background

To assess whether educational backgrounds in communication were deemed necessary for achieving positions in the organization that dealt with internal communication and organizational values, respondents were asked the highest academic qualification they received. As Table 6.5 shows, the 29 who responded to this question revealed a very well-educated group. Only three reported that their highest qualification is a high school degree while eight had master’s degrees, nine had graduate diplomas, and eight had bachelor’s degrees. Of the three whose highest qualification was a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) degree<sup>6</sup>, two were male and one was female. The three female EGMs had masters degrees albeit in different disciplines.

The respondents reported having majored in areas as diverse as political science, business and finance, journalism, library science, international relations, education, engineering, and communication.

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<sup>6</sup> A TAFE degree is a post-secondary school program that is oriented toward vocational and technical education.

Table 6.5 Respondents' educational background

Highest academic qualification	Number
High school	0
TAFE	3
Bachelor's degree	8
Graduate diploma	10
Master's degree	8
PhD	0
No answer	1
Total	30

#### 6.2.5 Professional Background

The practitioner's professional background is described here by the number of years they have worked in the communication industry, not necessarily within the organization. As many practitioners change employers over the duration of their career, it was best to ask them their total number of years in communication, and if they had a career other than communication, to indicate what it was and how long they practised in that career.

The respondents had clocked an average of 16 years of communication experience. The years of experience ranged from one to 30. Three reported 30 years experience, and one reported 27 years experience. Of these four people however, only one had the seniority of position which reports directly to the CEO. This indicates that amount of communication experience does not necessarily equate with seniority of position.

Of the practitioners who reported their previous careers (20), six were former journalists, three were teachers, three were in government policy or youth welfare, two were in sales and marketing and two were former diplomats. Other prior careers reported were: librarian (1), corporate banker (1), publishing (1), and change management/engineering (1). It should be noted that two of the four respondents who report directly to the CEO were former diplomats.

### 6.2.6 Other data

All the practitioners interviewed were of Anglo-Saxon or Caucasian ethnicity and all who answered the question on religious background (17) were Christians.

## **6.3 Respondents' organizational contexts**

One of the propositions in this research is that organizational factors influence the role that communication practitioners enact in the organizational value-setting process. To provide an organizational level context, the organizations represented in this study are described based on their size, age, culture, industry sectors, and ownership. Care has been given to describing them to maintain the anonymity of the organizations.

### 6.3.1 Organizational profiles

The 26 organizations represented in this study are mostly large, corporate, public companies, most of which have offices overseas. The organizational size is based on the number of employees as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Trewin, 2002) where companies with more than 200 employees are considered large. However, except for one organization which had less than 200 employees, they had from 450 to 175,000 employees in the Australian/New Zealand region. Since some of the organizations were multinational companies, the employees based in other countries were not counted.

The organizations represented in this study comprised Australian and international companies. Of the 26 companies, 15 were Australian companies and 11 were foreign companies with operations in Australia. The 11 foreign companies have corporate headquarters in North America, Europe or Asia. The organizations represented various industry sectors. Seven of the 26 companies represented the manufacturing industry, five were from finance and insurance, three from communications, two from sales and marketing, two from utilities, and one each for the professional, health, agriculture, energy, science, food and beverage, and retail sectors.

The average age of the companies represented in this study was 71.5 years so they could hardly be considered organizations in the early stages of their life cycle. Six companies were newly established in the 1990s but they were set up as offshoots of an older larger 'parent' company, except for one which was a newly-established government authority.

In terms of the ownership structure, 19 organizations represented in this study are publicly listed companies, although a few are not listed on the Australian Stock Exchange but are listed on overseas (US or London) stock exchanges. The other organizations can be described as fully government owned institutions (3), a semi-government, semi-public organizations (2), not for profit (1), and private firm (1).

### 6.3.2 Organizational culture

To understand the context in which the respondents worked, they were asked to describe their organizational culture in their own words. As a result, several descriptors came up: centralised, authoritative, hierarchical, paternalistic, siloed, risk-averse, conservative, bureaucratic, command and control, process-focussed, participative. The varying responses reflected the stages some of their organizations were at as part of a cultural change process at the time of the interview.

For example, when MaryAnn was approached for the interview, her company had just experienced a major crisis that resulted in a wide-ranging structural overhaul including a change of the executive team. Her interview was postponed to six months later to allow the process to settle in and she could provide more interesting insights. When the interview eventually transpired, the organization was in the middle of the cultural transformation process.

We've got the mix of the old culture and the new culture. The old culture is known for being a command and control culture where people waited to be told what to do and needed a lot of direction and needed a lot of support to do their jobs. And the new culture is that of accountability and proactive culture. (Mary Ann)

Nevertheless, after analysing the range of respondents' descriptors for organizational culture, authoritative organizational cultures were slightly more predominant than participative cultures. Each respondent was given an opportunity to describe his or her organizational culture even if they belonged to the same organization, to assess whether the work colleagues viewed the organizational cultures in a similar manner. Table 6.6 shows the distribution of the respondents' answers.

Descriptors such as 'strong', 'centralised', 'conservative' were categorised as authoritative while words such as 'collaborative', 'people-focussed' were categorised as participative cultures. Organizations described as being in the midst of a transition between the old and the new cultures, or having sub-cultures were classified in the combined category. The four respondents from two companies who were interviewed separately all responded to the question and their interpretations of the organizational



culture aligned with that of their work colleagues. Only one respondent for each of the other two companies which interviewed together responded to the question and were thus counted accordingly.

*Table 6.6 Distribution of respondents' organizational cultures*

Type of organizational culture	Number
Authoritative	14
Participative	11
Combined	5
Total	30

Mary Ann, for example, revealed the tensions her organization experienced during the changeover from a more authoritative to a more participative culture.

We're in a transitional period culturally because we have a lot of work to address cultural issues that we may...in the last 12 months and we have brought in new people. We've got the mix of the old culture and the new culture. The old culture is known for being a command and control culture where people waited to be told what to do and needed a lot of direction and needed a lot of support to do their jobs. ...so we've been working towards a culture that tells it like it is, so more honest and open culture. We've also in the past had a culture of people agreeing to anything but then walk out the door and then quickly change their minds or I guess...work in different directions. So we've been doing a lot of work in encouraging people to speak up, and listen with the understanding that they can have a vote when they're asked to have a vote.  
(Mary Ann)

Similarly, Mitch whose organization was still experiencing the effects of a merger at the time of the interview revealed the challenges of integrating two different cultures.

It (the acquiring company) has been a centrally controlled organization I suppose by the nature of having everyone in the head office environment. And it's an organization which is promoted and looks to very strong leadership as well. (The acquired company) on the other hand has come from the (larger business group) which has very much been based on a decentralised or autonomous control and not particularly prescriptive I suppose in terms of, setting financial targets, but how you actually achieve that is up to you. And so, as we are putting these two cultures together, now obviously you're going to find some frictions in that process. But we're 18 months into it and it's a long process but we've made some really good inroads into how we join those, they're coming to terms with the slightly more prescriptive strategy I suppose.  
(Mitch)

Kalli admitted to the existence of sub-cultures in the large manufacturing company in which she works.

I think we'd have varying cultures where you would say, it was probably a can-do culture in large parts of the organization and then there's (sic) other parts of the organization where you have a very stable workforce and the challenges of modern technology aren't always welcomed. Not necessarily resistant to technology but change overall. (Kalli)

In general however, the organizations classified as combined cultures either tended towards a more participative culture, as in the cases of Mary Ann and Kalli or more towards an authoritative culture as in the case of Mitch’s organization.

**6.3.3 Triggers for organizational change**

To establish whether the respondents’ organizations had opportunities to undergo value setting, they were asked whether their organizations underwent change, what was the nature of the change, and what triggered the organizational change. Their responses are summarised in the tables below.

All the respondents reported that their organizations underwent change or were in the midst of the change at the time they were interviewed. While most of the respondents reported changes within the last five years, one respondent however described the major change that occurred 15 years ago. The nature of the organizational changes were categorized into four themes and they are summarized below.

*Table 6.7 Summary of nature of organizational changes*

<b>Nature of Change</b>	<b>Number</b>
Structural	18
Cultural	4
Structural & Cultural	4
Business Focus	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

As Table 6.7 shows, most of the respondents reported structural changes in their organizations in recent years. These included mergers, de-mergers, acquisitions, downsizing, streamlining of specialty functions, re-organizing business units, shifting to regional and/or global business models. Cultural changes included a change in the purpose, behavioural transformation, and the use of performance measurement tools. A change in the business focus meant that the company expanded its business to explore new markets (Fiona and Marge), or that the business had to refocus on specific areas of the business (Martin and Sam).

Business performance issues were reported as the main triggers of the organizational changes. Given that most of the respondents’ organizations were corporate and publicly listed companies, the changes were mainly driven by business imperatives. While the individual responses were considered, the

respondents who belonged to the same organization replied in the same way so they were counted as one. A summary of the organizational responses is listed in Table 6.8.

*Table 6.8 Triggers of organizational change*

<b>Trigger of Change</b>	<b>Number</b>
CEO	5
Extend market opportunities/growth	5
Share/business performance (negative)	5
Competition	3
Process/IT	2
Strategic development	1
Natural progression (maturity)	1
Government policy	1
No response	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

Table 6.8 shows that the organizational changes were equally driven by three factors: the CEO (usually a new one); a need to expand the business’ market opportunities; or a need to improve the company’s overall financial performance.

To summarize, the organizations in which the respondents of this study belong may be described as large-sized (based on employee numbers), more than half were Australian companies, mostly established and publicly listed companies. The respondents’ descriptions revealed a slightly more authoritative set of cultures over participative cultures but some described a combination of cultures within their organizations. The respondents also operated in organizations which have recently undergone change, most of which were described by the respondents as structural changes driven by business imperatives. A small number of respondents described their changes as cultural or a combination of structural and cultural changes.

**6.4 Organizational value-setting process**

This section presents the results relating to the manner in which organizational values are set and the respondents’ involvement in the organizational value-setting process.

#### 6.4.1 How organizations set their values

When respondents were asked how their organizations set their values, not all were familiar with the process but those who were described the process. In collating the responses of the interviewees, four clear stages emerged from their descriptions, although an additional two stages emerged for some respondents. Figure 6.1 illustrates these stages.

Developing values or constructing values comprised several stages—the identification of the values, the refinement, program development, and the communication and dissemination stages. The additional two stages comprise the planning and evaluation of the value-setting process. The planning stage includes the realization by an individual or group of individuals (which in some cases include the communication practitioner) that the organizational values need to be developed, reviewed and/or modified. This realization occurs as a consequence of identifying a problem which relates to the organizational culture, and thus the value setting or value change process is seen as a response to solving the problem.

Evaluation while illustrated as a final stage is actually an ongoing process. The communication practitioner and the steering committee in which s/he is involved monitor the value-setting process as it is implemented throughout the organization.

Only a few of the respondents in this study suggested they were involved in these two additional stages. In particular, Marge, Sam, Donna and Mary Ann expressed their involvement in the planning of the process and being a member of the steering committee which oversaw the process.

##### *Stage 1: Identification and formulation*

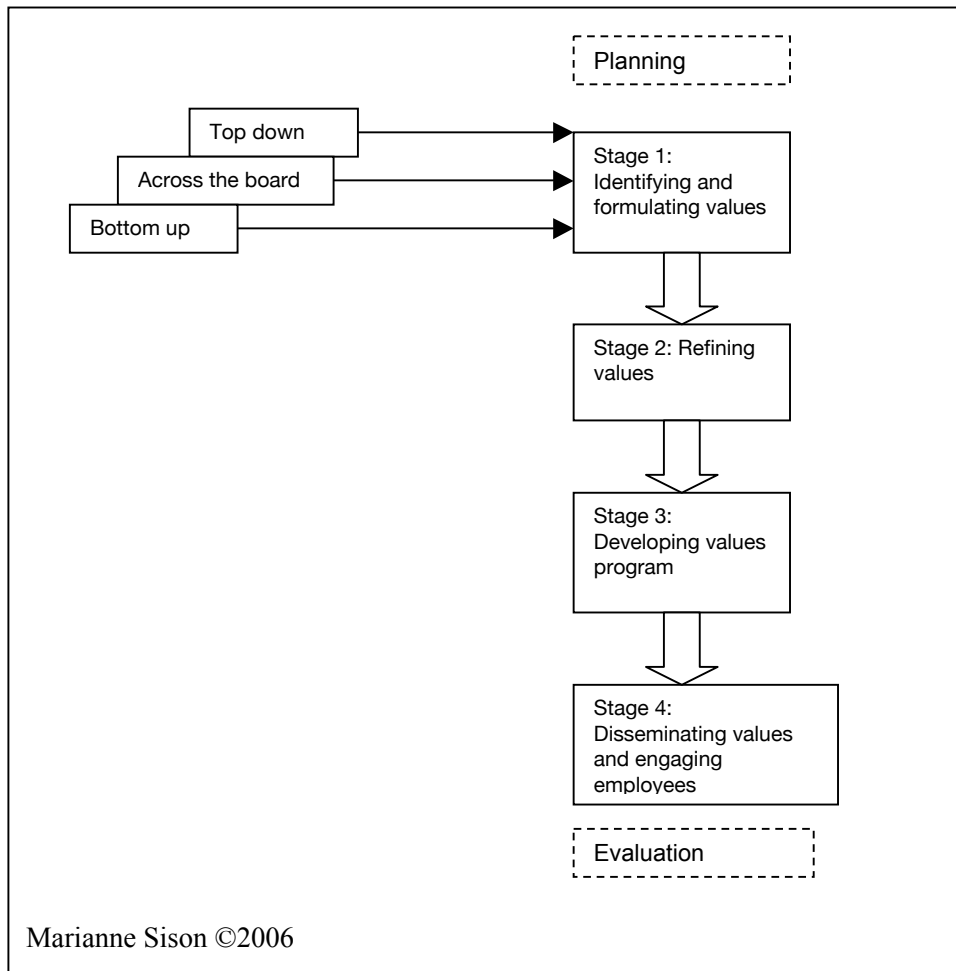
In the identification stage, I found there were three versions depending on the source or who is involved in the identification.

##### *Top down*

In the top down version, the CEO sometimes alone, or with his Executive Team, go away and brainstorm the values. During this process they develop the values themselves as part of their strategic planning process. In some instances like in Mandy's organization, they "spent months and months coming out with these values" and at some point, employed an external consultant. In Tom's

organization, the former CEO set the values because he “loved strategy, vision/mission stuff”. The top down approach to value setting where the dominant coalition presents the organizational values to the employees provides the senior leadership ownership of the value-setting process. In this version, the communication practitioners were not actively involved.

Figure 6.1 Organizational value-setting process



Bottom Up

The bottom up version reflects a process wherein the employees from all levels of the organization are involved in the initial identification through their participation in workshops. While the senior leadership may have decided that the process is going to take place and provided the parameters for the process, they have not provided any input on what the workshop participants should think about. In

Mary Ann's organization, employees drove the values and the senior management used the information as a basis for developing the behaviours that corresponded with the values.

Effectively we asked 5000 employees what they thought the values of the company should be. And we held focus groups right across the group, and then we put them on the shelf, did nothing on that piece of work, and that coincided with the big issues we had to deal with last year...and it was considered that we need to focus on that (the core business) and then come back to the issue of values, which we did do very quickly. And basically dusted off that work, and then looked at that data in the context of where we are right now. Culturally, what do we need to address, what we are now. And the group executive committee looked at that work, looked at what staff had come up with, and did a bit more with it to, not to really redesign it, our corporate principles statements are exactly what you'd expect a company like ours would have. We would like to be honest...etc. But what the group had actually decided was that "that's great, but we need actual behaviours" and we need to list those behaviours underneath each principle, and we need to be very clear about what behaviours are so that any body could read this and go okay I understand what it means to be open and honest...and so on. (Mary Ann)

### *Across the Board*

This version involves a combined effort where the management and staff all participated in the identification of the values. Sam's organization represented this version well.

Um, it's absolutely critical that it's got to be driven from the top and the bottom. The Managing Director has got to be absolutely committed to it, demonstrate his or her commitment, and the employees have got to be heavily involved. Otherwise, it will never be accepted. (Sam)

Donna recounted how her organization integrated various people across the company and across two countries.

April 2005 rolled out values to the first 200, response has been really great, positive, strong level of acceptance and understanding. Because we did it on the back of feedback, we demonstrated that we were listening and we were doing something about it. So there was an appetite there for it. And certainly, in the development of the process it was bottom up all the way so the series of 200 focus groups with 2500 people and from all divisions, all levels of the hierarchy, all locations across Australia and New Zealand and that work was collated, condensed and simplified by a smaller group (internally) of about 60 people. They came together for 2 day workshop where they then out of 2500 came out with four draft values and four or five behaviours per value and they were ratified by the executive team without a word being changed. It's amazing. There were no changes. (Donna).

### *Stage 2: Refinement, wording*

In bottom up processes, this stage involves the initial brainstormed ideas going through another workshop or process to refine the words. Usually a communication practitioner is present here either as a participant or as a consultant—to get the words right. But usually the employees who participate in the workshop are the ones who choose the words to ensure their ownership.

In top down approaches, the refinement process may include the most senior communication practitioner to assist the CEO and/or executive leadership team to find the right words. Usually once the wording is finalised, the values are sent to the board for sign off.

In the across the board approach, the refinement process goes to the middle management group to refine the words from the top management and the employees so that they can find some common ground. The words are finalised by the middle management and sent to the top management for sign off.

### *Stage 3: Program development*

In most cases, this is where the communication practitioner is most involved. When the values have been identified, the words have been chosen, the communication practitioner is asked to support the value change program by developing a communication strategy and developing a program of engagement. So activities, events and messages are developed by the communication practitioner along with the HR staff or a project committee to ensure the employees are aware of the values, know what they mean, and understand the ‘behaviours’ expected of them that relate to the values.

### *Stage 4: Dissemination and engagement*

In this stage, the values are disseminated to the employees through overt and covert ways. Overt ways include road shows or workshops or seminars where the CEO and/or leadership team speak to the employees about the new values, why they are important, what they mean and how each individual can ‘align’ themselves to the values. For example, Donna’s company used three tools—a newsletter, a series of cascading briefings and workshops for 7000 managers.

The communication practitioner usually drives this process or collaborates with Human Resources staff. In the covert approach, some organizations develop the values and introduce them quietly with no fanfare or launch. Rather they focus on the senior and executive leadership people to absorb, personify and behave according to the values, and serve as role models to the employees. This behaviour-based rather than communication-based approach is rather innovative and while seemingly questionable in the context of transparency, seems reasonable in the context of actions speaking louder than words.

## **6.5 Participation in strategic planning**

Before asking the respondents about their participation in the organizational value-setting process, it was necessary to establish whether they were involved in the organization's strategic planning process to ensure their understanding of the two processes.

Nineteen respondents said they were involved in their company's strategic planning activities, while nine admitted they were not, and two did not respond. Of the 19 respondents who said they were involved, ten were involved in activities such as developing and implementing the communication strategy that supported the business strategy, as well as crisis management. Four respondents provided advice or comments on the company strategy, two were involved in planning, creating and documenting the process, albeit one of them was only involved when it related to values and behaviours. One respondent's involvement in strategic planning was to provide the results of external monitoring.

The respondents who reported non-involvement in strategic planning reasoned that their position level, the commercial focus of the process, or the process was undertaken at the overseas head office, restricted their involvement.

## **6.6 Participation in organizational value setting**

When the respondents were asked whether they were involved in developing the vision, mission, values and codes of ethics, the responses were quite interesting. But because organizational values were defined for this research as comprising any or all four of those elements, any affirmative answer was considered an indication of involvement in developing organizational values.

Furthermore, the respondents interpreted the word 'develop' differently. Two respondents, Karli, and Hailey, felt they were not involved in developing the values statements because they were involved in the developing of programs, or because they were only consulted.

Karli, who was one of the four most senior communicators in the study, replied she wasn't involved in developing the vision, mission, values or codes of ethics. But that she was involved in "developing programs to give meaning and living them". She said she was involved in how they were perceived as



underpinning the vision. Given that her involvement is part of the articulation stage, she was counted as being ‘involved in the development of organizational values’.

Hailey, on the other hand, answered that she was not involved in developing the vision, mission, values or code of ethics but then explained that she was “slightly involved when it was revisited. It was talking about, when we were doing the strategic plan last year, and just discussion, taking part in a meeting where we agreed that we accept the Board’s changes”. So because of this involvement, she was also counted as being involved in the organizational value-setting process.

Two respondents however, Kim and Jane, seemed a bit confused on their involvement initially saying they were involved in developing the code and values respectively but when followed up with a question on why they weren’t involved in others (vision, mission), they answered that they were also involved in those components and offered different reasons.

Kim claimed responsibility for developing the code of conduct/ethics particularly in “how it can be perceived or shown...not technically developing it straight up but it’s how it’s presented and how it’s supported.” But when asked why she wasn’t involved in the other areas, she said:

Not involved because they were done at a group level (leadership) by invitation, there’s only like 35 or 40 people they choose and you get selected. Sometimes it is done by the executive and the board. And so communications had a role because my manager would have been involved. (EGM, Corporate affairs attends board meetings as required) ...there’s (sic) only 5 EGMs. (Kim)

Jane’s interpretation of involvement was rather confused. For example, in answer to questions about her involvement in developing vision, mission, code of ethics and values, Jane said she ‘no’ to all but “participated in the workshops where the values were developed” and because of her communication role, she “was involved in communicating it after they were developed.” And to the follow up question which asked why she wasn’t involved, she replied she wasn’t involved “because (the) opportunity wasn’t offered” and that “the vision came from the (company) group, the mission/purpose was developed by the executive team” and the “values came from the (overseas) parent company”.

Nevertheless, the above four respondents were counted as being involved in the process because organizational value-setting process is defined in this research as including the articulation and communication phase.

To summarize, 19 respondents said they were involved in value setting and 11 reported not being involved at all in developing organizational values (Table 6.9). The involvement of the those who reported participating in value setting varied from being involved to developing the vision, mission, values and code of conduct either individually, some of the four, or all four elements.

*Table 6.9 Breakdown of respondents' involvement in organizational value setting*

<b>Involvement in value setting?</b>	<b>Number</b>
Yes	19
No	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

The respondents who reported involvement in value setting were then asked the nature of their involvement. The 19 respondents reported their involvement in the process usually combined several activities. However, as Table 6.10 shows, the most frequently mentioned activity was developing communication strategy, programs and materials (17). In this category, the respondents included activities such as developing communication strategy that supports the values (6), developing the implementation and dissemination plan and message channels (6), as well as the presentation of the words and images of the values statements (5). This finding supports the claim by US practitioner Howard that most practitioners are charged with the 'communication' rather than the 'construction' of values (*PR News*, 2001).

The next most cited area of involvement was planning and management of the process (5). In this category, the respondents cited being part of the project team or steering committee developing the process, planning the implementation of the organizational value-setting process, and in some instances, leading the process. The other activity respondents reported involvement in was through workshop participation (4). In this group, respondents participated in focus groups either as a representative of the entire workforce, or as a representative of the functional group, or as a member of management. Four respondents also mentioned they provided advice or input to the process. Five respondents Chloe, Sam, Marge, Mary Ann and Donna reported either driving the process or being with the group that drove the process.

Table 6.10 Nature of respondents' involvement in organizational value setting

Nature of involvement	Frequency
Develop and implement communication strategy, programs and materials	17
Planning and management of process via project team	5
Participation in workshops	4
Provide advice/input to process	4

The respondents usually were involved in a combination of activities. For example, the four respondents who participated in workshops also crafted words and communication programs and strategies. Gerry who provided strategic input also crafted words. Chloe's participation is described as "membership on working group, writing and editing", while Donna was a steering committee member and a focus group participant.

Marge acknowledged that it was her position as a member of the senior leadership team, rather than her being a communication person, that allowed her involvement in the organizational value-setting process.

Really it wasn't in my capacity as a comms person, it was more, we had a senior leadership team workshop about four years ago now. And as part of that, we identified the company's values need to be overhauled. The values that have been developed by a previous CEO, they just didn't apply to where the company was going, what kind of organization we wanted to be. So I volunteered to lead a team of other senior leaders and other executive leaders to develop those in consultation with our people and really reflecting on what the company strategy was, what kind of values, what kind of culture and values the organization need to have in order to achieve its strategy. (Marge)

On the other hand, Sam recounted how he was one of two people who established the process, in which he later participated. It must be noted that Sam does not hold an executive leadership position in the company but has direct access to the CEO.

Well the vision statement again was developed in a similar process. We got together some key people from the organization. We ran a series of sessions with a facilitator to identify the key elements of (company's) operations, its values, etc. So I was one of the key people involved in setting up that process and then being part of the process. The culture change manager and I were the ones who set that process up. (Sam)

In terms of their specific involvement in developing each component of the organizational values statements, 11 participated in developing the values statement, 10 reported involvement in vision

statements, five in mission statements, and six in codes of ethics. Six respondents stated that they were involved in three or four of the elements comprising values (vision, mission, values and codes of conduct). Only three respondents, Chloe, Sam and Donna, reported involvement in developing all four elements.

The reasons the 11 respondents gave to explain their non-involvement in the process can be grouped into two: first, the values were developed at a global level, usually in the overseas head office (4) and second, the values existed before they arrived and hadn't since required change (7). In particular, Kalli was in a non-communication role during the time of the process, so she was not personally involved but she recounted how Corporate Affairs "had a huge part in the deployment, with the corporate branding group in terms of a video with the CEO, and posters, information kit." When probed whether they would have wanted to get involved, seven (7) respondents replied in the affirmative, three (3) answered 'no' and one (1) did not answer.

The seven who expressed interest in being involved gave three reasons. The first reason relates involvement in the process as part of their roles as communicators. Caitlin explained her expectations of her role as a communication professional:

Absolutely, because the communications professional I am is based on vision, values and those kinds of things, central, if I went on from here to another organization, everything would be aligned, the vision and values. (Caitlin)

Hannah related her involvement to developing values as being part of the package of how they represent the organization to internal and external stakeholders.

I would actually because I think the corporate image, or the corporate, the people, what we're trying to portray as the organization hinges on those values and it's no sense just having it written and put away somewhere. What we try and do with any of the information we sending externally is highlight these values so we want our people to know what they are so that we can readily pick out examples of what we're doing and showcase that back to people outside the organization. (Hannah)

Paul believed that being involved in setting organizational values is part of the communicator's conscience role.

Yes, because I believe that in the role of corporate affairs you do have some input to be the conscience of the company, so because of the touch points you have internally and externally, you are in a position to understand the climate and the mood of the organization....(Paul)

Another reason for wanting to get involved is because of their personal, rather than their functional, capacities. Patricia expressed that she wanted to get involved more as an employee rather than in her capacity as the communication professional because she “feels strong that those kinds of initiatives should not be driven by the corporate affairs function because they are otherwise seen as a PR initiative and should be driven by the people who own the business.” Similarly, Martin wanted to get involved as part of his professional development particularly because as he says, “I would be excited by the opportunity to work on the global level—it’s a personal thing...not necessarily part of my job.”

The third reason two respondents expressed their interest in involvement was because of their strong beliefs in ensuring that values should be lived, not just verbalized. Justine commented:

Yes, it was (is) my area of specialty. I am a strong believer in values being lived out rather than communicated in hard copy form. So my reasons for being involved would be to tone down the mouse mats, the mugs of the world...I’d rather demonstrate than explain.

Similarly, Walter emphasised his preference for action:

To me it is what you do. A vision statement can be quite hypocritical. I will say that as a company we have raised our level, we have said we will do these things, and that actually creates, it raises your own bar. You’ve got to behave otherwise you’ll look a hypocrite.

Two of the three respondents who preferred not to get involved in the process reasoned that because their values are defined from the global overseas headquarters, getting involved complicates the process. Tom said, “(I am) not a great believer in decisions by committee. That issue is set and demonstrated by CEO.” In the same vein, Karen stated, “No it would require a global line. It will complicate it too much to have everybody involved. And I think they got it right because they didn’t apply a standard vision and mission to everyone.” Laura, on the other hand, thought it was not necessary for her to be further involved because she is already “involved in bringing meaning to those values.” This last comment reflects the practitioner’s thinking that meaning making is not part of the value-setting process.

To summarise, most (19) of the respondents reported they were involved in the organizational value-setting process. Their involvement ranged from planning the process, providing advice to the process, participating in the process, and developing communication strategy and programs for dissemination, writing and editing. As the results showed, the majority (15) of the respondents who were involved were included in the process for their communication capabilities. What is significant however is that the results reveal an interest by the respondents to be involved in the process. This interest indicates the

potential for public relations/communication practitioners to take the lead and initiate the organizational value-setting process. This section also revealed the reasons why practitioners who are not involved in the organizational value-setting process would like to be involved, one of which is a matter of expectations. It might now be worthwhile to discuss who the respondents think should be involved in organizational value setting.

## **6.7 Perceptions of role involvement in organizational value setting**

To examine the respondents' perceptions of the organizational value-setting process, they were asked a series of questions regarding the people they knew were currently involved, their level of influence in the process, their thoughts about who should be involved, and the role of the communication practitioner in the value-setting process.

### 6.7.1 Current involvement in organizational value-setting process

When the respondents were asked who were the organizational members they knew were involved in developing organizational values, they provided diverse responses indicating organizations have different ways of interpreting the process.

Majority of the respondents (19) indicated the involvement of the CEO either on his/her own, with HR, with the Board, or as part of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The ELT is composed of heads of the business units and functions which includes Human Resource and Communications executives either separately or combined with other functions. The involvement of organizational members in the organizational value-setting process is summarised here in Table 6.11.

The four respondents who indicated that employees (three just employees and one along with the CEO/MD) were involved in the process provided some idea of the extent or how many employees were involved. In Marie's organization, she recounted that every individual in their division of 450 had the opportunity to have an input in their yearly event to revisit the vision and strategy—which she found “pretty unusual”. In the final event which she ran, about 190 employees came. She added however the senior management still had “slightly more influence because they have to set direction but everyone has the opportunity”. In Kara's company, they started with the “very top 100 people in the company who get the information in a particular way, and the next 200 get it in a particular way, and the next 300 then people managers and we rely on people managers to communicate effectively within their teams.” In Sam's company, the Managing Director and employees drove the culture change process jointly

where the MD personally talked to about 1000 employees in the three months of his first six months in office.

*Table 6.11 Person/s involved in organizational value-setting process*

<b>Person/s involved in organizational value setting</b>	<b>Number</b>
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)*	10
ELT and Board	4
CEO and Human Resources (HR)	3
Employees and senior management**	2
Employees, HR and executive committee	2
CEO only	2
HR and Communication	1
HR and senior management	1
HR only	1
Don't know	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

*\*Executive Leadership Team comprises the CEO and heads of business and functional units (also known as EGMs or GMs) who report directly to the CEO.*

*\*\* Senior Management also known as Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprises managers/leaders who report to the EGMs or GMs.*

On the other hand, while Donna described the process as “certainly...bottom up all the way so the series of 200 focus groups with 2500 people and from all divisions, all levels of the hierarchy, all locations across Australia and New Zealand and that work was collated, condensed and simplified by a smaller group (internally) of about 60 people”, she also answered that the value-setting process involved the “steering committee, the executive team, corporate affairs and HR groups.” This contradiction showed that the value-setting process while involving the employees through focus group participation is still generally viewed as a project driven by the executive leadership team. Furthermore, these numbers of how many employees were involved need to be put in the context of the total number of employees in the organization. As such, the percentage of involvement ranged from 1.4% to 42%.

When comparing the responses of those who mentioned employees were involved in organizational value setting with the respondents who described their cultures as participative, only two of the four

respondents were consistent. One respondent, Marie, who described her organizational culture as “bureaucratic, command and control, definitely more authoritative, closed” also said that despite the senior management having more influence in the direction, “every individual has the opportunity to have input.”

One respondent reported that Internal Communication was responsible for the change management process while HR looked after the code of conduct/ethics (Gerry). One respondent admitted no knowledge of who is involved in the value-setting process (Hannah) and the three respondents did not know who were involved because the activity is undertaken in their overseas corporate headquarters (Martin, Patricia and Walter).

In general however, the results demonstrate that currently, organizations’ top management is heavily involved in the organizational value-setting process.

#### 6.7.2 Influence in the organizational value-setting process

The next question asked the respondents, of the people they mentioned above, who they thought had the most influence in the organizational value-setting process. Of the 22 who responded to this question, 19 ranked the CEO as having the most influence in the process. Human Resources or People and Culture were mentioned as influential by eight of the respondents, three times as equal first with the CEO, once as equal first with HR and the Executive team, once as equal first with Corporate Affairs, twice as second most influence, once as third most influential with Corporate Affairs.

Seven respondents ranked the Executive Team as the most influential in organizational value setting. Two of the respondents felt they were influential in the process, one ranking herself equal with HR and the other as third after the CEO and HR. Table 6.12 shows the summary of how the respondents perceive who has the most influence in organizational value setting.



Table 6.12 Respondents' perceptions of influence in organizational value setting

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Frequency
CEO/MD	19				19
HR	5	2	1		8
Executive Team	3	4			7
Corporate Affairs	1		2		3
External Consultants			2		2
Marketing	1				1
Board				1	1

However, the comments of two respondents revealed some discomfort with a CEO-driven and owned process. For example, Kara while saying that the CEO has the most influence added her reservations:

...it's a hard one because the desire for the business team to define it was very strong and so while he had an interest and an opinion, he respected the team of people who was put together to work on it. There was no great deal of a change, or a great deal of "I want you to pull these things through". There was a high level of trust that the people coming together knew our organization and what it needed as well as understanding there's a broader context in that (country of head office) is as important. So I find it hard to answer. (Kara)

Mitch, on the other hand, while stating his Managing Director has the most influence that then cascades to the Executive Leadership Group and equally to Communications and Human Resources, reiterated the importance of people's behaviour as the most influential component to organizational values:

I think, it's interesting because the values, when you look at most top 100 company values they're not, there's nothing very left field generally but it's things you and I would subscribe to as being important. The real issue is how you demonstrate the living of it...the actual formation of the values themselves I don't want to play down that process, but they're relatively easy things to say but much harder to live and say okay, for example, integrity which turns up in everyone's face, how do you actually articulate, what is the display of integrity in decision making and how do you articulate that to your people and how do they see that in their everyday work and in the decisions being made, that's the critical issue. You know like whacking posters around the organization is a complete and utter waste of time.

To further explore this discomfort, the respondents were asked to who they think should have the most influence in the process.

### 6.7.3 Normative roles in organizational value setting

Where previously most respondents reported their CEOs currently influenced the value-setting process the most, they revealed a more extended view of who should influence organizational values. As Table

6.13 shows, about a third of the respondents preferred senior management and the employees to jointly influence the organizational value-setting process. Half (15) of the respondents mentioned that ‘employees’ should have some influence in organizational value setting, although nine of those respondents indicated that employees share their influence with the senior management, and one with shareholders and the Board. Five respondents felt that employees alone should have the most influence in organizational value setting. However, if the responses for CEO only and top management were combined (13), they would still indicate a good number of respondents’ preference for the top end of the organization to have the most influence in the organizational value-setting process.

The respondents who believed employees should have the most influence in the value-setting process all pointed to the importance of employee involvement in any process for ownership, ‘buy-in’, meaning and recognition.

*Table 6.13 Respondents’ preferred drivers of organizational value setting*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number</b>
Combined Senior Management (CEO, ELT, SLT) & Employees	9
CEO only	7
Top Management/Leadership (CEO, Board, ELT inc HR/Comm)	6
Employees	5
All (shareholders, board and employees)	1
Marketing	1
No answer	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

Jane and Caitlin related how employee involvement in the organizational value-setting process gives employees a sense of ownership which makes it more meaningful to them individually.

Well then, they can take ownership and believe in them and if they’re involved in setting them it means more.... (Jane)

I believe there should be a process for all staff to evolve the vision because they need to own it, which means they own it, they work toward it, which means they’re going to reach it quicker and behave successfully. (Caitlin)

Kim and Kara, on the other hand, argued that employee buy-in is critical and more effective than forcing employees to behave in certain ways. Kim however admitted that despite her belief, the organization hasn’t adopted her thinking.

I think the employees need to have that buy-in because otherwise they might have no connection with it. I do think the employees need to have some buy in. It's very hard to do an organisational sell without buy-in. Hence we haven't done that... (Kim)

People, the employees. So ultimately they make it live or die... and if it's something that a good representation of them is not buying into then no amount of, you know, leadership enforcement will make it happen. (Kara)

Patricia's response meanwhile indicated that involving employees in the organizational value-setting process is a form of recognition for their hard work and length of service in the company.

I think it's a cooperation. I think the business, those in the front line should be part of the process. I think people who are in the line, people who do the hard work should be involved in that... because they're probably the people who stay for 20 years... (Patricia)

The group of respondents who believed that both senior management and the employees should have the most influence in the organizational value-setting process provided different versions of how the influence is shared.

Four of them (Justine, Mitch, Marge and Kalli) agreed that the senior management should still shape the discussion and lead by example, and that the employees should participate and provide input. For example, Justine's and Mitch's views, while advocating employee input, tended to favour senior management in a way that it can be viewed almost as a top-down approach.

...but I do think the management team needs to shape them and verify them with all levels of staff. Validate them, try it out...does it work? And the reason I'm talking about it being a top down now is if they don't live it, then it's not going to work so they have to have a strong input into it. (Justine)

Again, it's all my views on values. I think the MD should because it's his organization and it's how he wants to see decisions made within the organization. Look it probably should be some input at least at the senior management level group I suppose or maybe cascading it even further to general staff but again it's the whole leading by example and very rarely do you get a value in there that's completely out of left field. The nature of values is going to be like that. (Mitch)

Marge and Kalli mentioned the importance of diversity of views from employees within the parameters set by the senior management.

In terms of involvement, I think there should be a cross section of people from across the business at all levels of the organization representing different types of people should come together and work out what it is...but I still do believe that the Executive need to be the one who shapes that discussion because they're the ones who know where the company needs to go.

And the involvement of the people really needs to be more, I can't work in a company that says that, so then if you say that "this works for me, then I can see that's important and I'm reminded of my own personal values." (Marge)

It still has to be led and driven from (sic) the CEO, you can't have employees just go off and develop the values in isolation. Having said that I don't think the CEO can necessarily go off and develop them in isolation, so and particularly for a company that has the diversity of our business, in terms of geography, in terms of culture, in terms of hierarchy, and I mean one of the things we apply is that we value diversity so you can't on the one hand value diversity and have everything that comes out from one person with no...so it's a (combination of) leadership and management in that mix. And this is my personal opinion which could be very different to (name of superior)'s opinion. (Kalli)

Five respondents (Fiona, Julie, Chloe, Chris and Sam) called for equal representation in the organizational value-setting process between the leadership team and the employees. Fiona specified that in addition to all staff, she believes that the Head of Marketing, Head of HR, Head of Corporate Affairs and the CEO are equally critical to the process of organizational value setting. Sam's comment best described the others' preference for the process to be driven from the top and from the bottom:

Um, it's absolutely critical that it's got to be driven from the top and the bottom. The Managing Director has got to be absolutely committed to it, demonstrate his or her commitment, and the employees have got to be heavily involved. Otherwise, it will never be accepted. (Sam)

The seven respondents who believed that the CEO alone should influence the organizational value-setting process all agreed that the CEO has the leadership position that allows him/her to drive the process, the respect to act as a role model and the connection between culture, vision and values. Paul's comments best described the view of this group:

I think it starts from the top. It's got to start from the top. so the President has to take ownership of it and how that's done, it's up to the president at that time. Things like values or cultural change don't stick unless you've got that kind of support—I think that's been in the textbooks for a long time and it still applies. And they have people who (think it's) the employee and management. If the boss ain't doing it, it ain't gonna happen. (Paul)

Laura, however, believed the CEO should have the most influence in organizational value setting "because the culture of the organization reflects his vision, his values and it enables us to rally behind him and everyone buys in to those values, he sets the tone and style".

Several respondents however countered that there should be more than one individual influencing the organizational value-setting process. Six respondents believed that it should be the executive leadership

team, comprising the CEO, the senior/executive managers, and even the Board according to one, who should have the most influence in the process.

In Mandy's organization, for example, the CEO led and facilitated the discussion and made very clear that the "values are not owned by HR" but by the CEO leadership team. Mary Ann included the board along with the leadership team and senior managers because she believes that they need to demonstrate to the employees how those values apply to decision-making.

So they're more inclined to make value-based decisions where they have been if they have been a key stakeholder in that discussion, the employees look to that leadership. Decisions that are made on values are the most impactful decisions....people notice those things. For example, someone gets promoted because they have the right behaviours. People say, "well done. That was exactly the person I would have chosen for that position. Or if someone has not been demonstrating the right behaviours and is well known for that and they get promoted, staff really notice that. That's what they look for. (Mary Ann)

Hannah and Karen, on the other hand, stressed the involvement of the communication department to provide 'wordsmithing' skills in the organizational value-setting process.

I think the senior group need(s) to but they need input from somebody that's got the wordsmith skills whether it's somebody like my boss, the Director of Communications or somebody in his team, they need some guidance because they're a group of scientists. They all come from a science background and they're very analytical people but they're not so good sometimes in conveying their messages. (Hannah)

I think it's those two people (HR Director and Global Chief Executive). You've always got to have the focus on the commercial and why we exist, the HR Director should be the one representing people, and what people need to be motivated. And I think there should be some consultation with Communication as to how you wordsmith it, and how you launch it. And probably the HR Director represents cultural change imperatives as well so I think that's another reason why it needs to be in that area. (Karen)

While the preceding discussion still reflected a predominantly top-down management perspective to organizational value setting, introducing employees into the mix of influential people in the process certainly indicates promising insights to employee participation. The value-setting process seems to be seen as an activity that is not the exclusive enclave of the founder or CEO as previous research found (Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1991). The findings also suggest the potential for extending participative decision-making to the organizational value-setting process. Furthermore, only three respondents perceived communication practitioners (Corporate Affairs) as currently influential in the organizational value-setting process. The next section follows up on this proposition.

#### 6.7.4 Perceptions of communication practitioner’s role in organizational value setting

When the respondents were asked their opinions on whether they thought public relations/corporate communication staff should have a role in the organizational value-setting process, 27 responded overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Two respondents emphatically said no, and one wasn’t too sure. Table 6.14 summarises their responses.

*Table 6.14 Communication practitioner’s involvement in value setting*

<b>Communication involved in value setting?</b>	<b>Number</b>
Yes	27
No	2
Not sure	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

Most of those who said that communication practitioners should have a role in organizational value setting tempered their responses by explaining their reasons in different ways. One group felt that being involved in value setting is part and parcel of their functional role as communicators. Another group said that communication staff should be one of many other groups in the organization who should participate and/or be consulted in the process. A smaller group believed that communication practitioners should have a larger role, and a couple of respondents felt the communication practitioners should have only some minor input in setting organizational values.

Twelve respondents reasoned that their roles as communicators, particularly in influencing the organization’s understanding, facilitating between employees, representing and advocating on behalf of the employees, made them eligible for involvement in the value-setting process. For example, Marie’s and Caitlin’s responses reflected the view that communication practitioners represent employees and other stakeholders to management.

I think that as communication professionals, part of our role is to understand our audiences and to understand the business that we are in, and I think that we can often bring an interesting and different perspective to the conversations about these things and it can often be a representative voice for staff and people aren’t in the room. (Marie)

Yes, as an influential role, as a facilitative role, because we progressive communicators recognise staff as the most valuable advocates particularly of large organizations I’m talking about, they’re critical to reputation. That’s why I would want to be part of the process. (Caitlin)

The communication practitioners' role in bringing about understanding in the organization and influencing, including the organizational value-setting process, were also mentioned.

I think so purely to be advocate of people, of its people but also to understand because corporate communicators generally have a good understanding of what the organization understands. And how they receive information and if I could share an example with you, the purpose when it was first developed by the team, it was three sentences long and in our influencing, it is now four words. (Kara)

Two critical reasons. The first one is the communications team has a dual role and as you would be well aware, people who don't understand what we do perceive us to be disseminating information and they don't understand that at least half of our role is listening, bringing information in to the organization. So we have an important role in influencing the organisation's understanding of what external perceptions are which will impact on their judgements around values. And the other very important role we have is advising and managing communications because the establishment and implementation I suppose of any values process won't be successful unless it's effectively communicated. (Sam)

Another reason why the respondents viewed organizational value setting as part of the communication practitioners' role is because they often provided the reality check. Mary Ann and Martin articulated this aspect.

I think that communication areas tend to be pragmatic and also should be in tune with what they can think about the company. So they can close the gap between perception and reality and that's an important role in advising the leadership on the facts as opposed to what people think. (Mary Ann)

I think it has a valuable role. I certainly can in that environmental scanning role and finding out, and also, obviously, the communication support, but also see, and it depends on who the person is in the role, but I actually think that sometimes it might give people a reality check. But that's a personal view. (Martin)

The group of nine respondents, who thought that communication staff should have a role in the organizational value-setting process but only as one of the many other stakeholders or group representatives, generally believed in equal representation across the organization. For example, Jane said that "I only represent one part of the business and there should be equal representation from other parts of the business". Justine echoed that in saying, "They (Communication) should be one of the stakeholders groups both in development and consulting". While Patricia thought that Communication "should be a participant like every other functional group, like HR, Environment, Finance, Legal", Karli thought otherwise, "it's not a functional role, everybody has a role, HR has a role because they are driving cultural change; everyone has a role because there's only certain things you can measure."

Several respondents mentioned HR's involvement in the change process particularly in organizational value setting. Kalli explained how the process requires the input of HR and Communication.

...but I believe that other functions should have a role as well. I mean you can equally say that HR should have a role in setting the values, we clearly have a role in deploying the values and educating and informing. Clearly we're exposed to a lot of the cultural elements where culture goes wrong or where culture goes right in terms of good news stories, in terms of having to manage, you know, media wise or management wise, things that aren't going to plan... (Kalli)

Equally, a couple of respondents who thought Communication staff should have a role in organizational value setting emphasised that they should only participate, not drive, the process. For example, Karen downplayed the communication practitioner role to its communicative aspects.

I think to the extent that we have been involved in helping them identify, or articulate the vision. I don't think we can drive the vision, because it should be research based... They're the ones who are closest to that, the Comms Director and the Comms people should be relatively close to that as well but not quite as accountable to those areas to be specific. So I think the Comms Directors need to be involved certainly towards the final stages, in making sure that from a communication perspective, the words are right, to get the right impact, maybe some of the testing, maybe focus-grouping once it has been reasonably or directionally set, just to verify that we're on the right track, and then the actual communication strategy for it should be very much involved in that. (Karen)

Patricia believed in limiting the communication practitioner's involvement in the organizational value-setting process because she contends that surrendering some power actually makes practitioners more effective.

...but they shouldn't be driving it, it shouldn't be seen as their process, otherwise it's not meaningful for the rest of the business. Sometimes you can do your job better if you give up some of your power. I think you can be more effective if you give up some of your power, because us corporate affairs professionals, we can't do everything. We need people in the business to take responsibility. (Patricia)

The following explanations of the three respondents who did not think communication practitioners should be involved in organizational value setting indicated varying perspectives about employee involvement and the communication function. Mandy, for example, reasoned that communication staff involvement is useful in organizational value setting if it relates to reputation but she still considered general staff input is more important:

I'm not necessarily sure that the corporate communications staff should. I believe their role is to communicate. It depends on what role those communication people have. If it is more around values and more around reputation and stuff like that, I believe they do have a valuable input but I think it's more important to have the actual staff consulted and having input in the process. (Mandy)



Laura's viewpoint on the other hand denoted almost an absolute deference to the CEO and a seemingly limited conception of the communication practitioner's role and potential roles:

No, because I don't think we are fully cognizant of where the CEO's taking the company, what his vision is, what the competitive threats are, what the latest thinking is around branding... customer service, or what we need to do to differentiate from other (industry sector) organizations. (Laura)

On the other hand, Marge believed it is one's seniority in the organization and one's personal interest that should determine one's involvement in organizational value-setting.

Um....(takes a while) there's no real need for them to be involved apart from being people to be communicated. So if it helps in that communications process, absolutely. But I would think that it's by the way really, whether they're from corporate communications or whether they're from sales, it's really as a member of the organization at a senior level...it's more the senior management involvement. So when I'm putting on my "senior manager's hat" rather than my "corporate affairs' hat" that I think I should be involved. And pure interest. You'd generally find that corporate affairs people, particularly internal comms, have much more interest and much more passion about it so I probably think they'd be good people to get involved because they'll help drive the process. (Marge)

In sum, the respondents' views about the extent of communication practitioner involvement in organizational value setting were largely informed by their individual perspectives about the communication function, workplace democracy and employee participation, and organizational hierarchies.

#### 6.7.5 Preparation required for organizational value setting

To assess the preparation required for a role in organizational value setting, the respondents were then asked whether any kind of training, experience or qualifications is required for one's involvement in organizational value setting, and if so what kind. Eighteen (18) of the respondents said no specific formal qualifications or training were required, nine (9) respondents said some training or qualifications were required and three (3) did not answer.

The respondents who said that no formal training or qualifications are required for participation in the organizational value-setting process however believed that preparation for the role comes through one's life experience, personal values, understanding people's motivations and what drives culture, and being a good communicator. Justine confided, "It's actually about life experience, it's not a course, you could

turn it into a discussion with some skills and experience. But I don't think there's any course that they need to do."

Walter succinctly put it as "the fundamental values of society, having a good grounding and ethics, strong personal values are important." Marge meanwhile emphasised one's personal values combined with one's passion are integral to one's involvement in the organizational value-setting process.

No, I don't think so. I think, values are values, you'll have them regardless, your own personal values. It's what you're really saying when you're developing value statements for your business, is how do we collectively behave, how do we want to interact with each other. So I think you don't need to have qualifications to do that. It's people working with people. But I think if people are passionate about it, it may have something to do with their background or their experience. (Marge)

Donna echoed Marge's point about passion, which she combined with management and communication skills.

I would say more personal qualities—empathy and passion for this process, I would think strategic thinking, and I think that good writing is absolutely critical because out of the writing comes clarity and you've got to be clear and simple And you've got to have really simple key messages that you're communicating. (Donna)

Kara related how one's value foundation and knowledge of the organizational system are important in one's involvement in the value-setting process.

I think the necessary experience is about what are the foundations that are essential for values to be lived and respected and how do organization systems support that. I think it's more about that understanding rather than if you craft a lovely campaign, fabulous posters and collateral, it's probably not going to work. I think the other level of expertise is that organizational values need to be the behaviours of leaders and role models and so an important part of any implementation has to be around how you excite leaders and be really clear that they are going to be measured on this stuff. I don't think you need a degree, it's more common sense understanding on leadership, role modelling, what are the things that will ultimately support behaviour and how do you involve your employees to interpret the terms in a way that is consistent but something that they own. (Kara)

Marie affirmed the importance of experience and knowledge of "how things are done around here, or the big picture" is necessary in the same way that Hannah asserted about having a handle on the corporate history.

I think a lot of experience comes into it and knowing a lot of the corporate history. You couldn't go in there with a degree and develop an organization's values because you don't have a feel for what the company is, where it's come from, or where it's going to. (Hannah)

Like Sam who expressed, “you just need to be a good communicator,” Kalli stressed the importance of being articulate, being a good listener and being a team player.

...there’s no point you going (to a workshop) if you can’t articulate my view or other people who would give you input because you are representing those people, you’re representing your peers. So I don’t think you need qualifications but certainly you need listening skills, being able to participate in a team environment, I think constructive interaction skills...(Kalli)

For those respondents who said some preparation might be useful, their proposals ranged from a formal degree in organizational psychology to professional development courses to mentoring. Others mentioned having a “commercial” head or business nous and “an understanding of what drives culture and what you can do to influence the culture for the company.”

Mary Ann summed up the key to one’s participation in the organizational value-setting process stems from the practitioner’s interpretive skills.

So it’s not just about what the values say because those values stuff actually look similar wherever you go, but it’s actually the interpretation and the spirit behind those words that actually changes the culture, makes the company more innovative than other companies.

To further emphasise the communication practitioners’ interest and potential to be involved in the value- setting process, when the respondents were asked whether their current qualifications and background are sufficient for their involvement in value setting, the answer was resoundingly affirmative among 23 respondents.

To summarize, most of the respondents believed that public relations/communication practitioners should be involved in organizational value setting. However the versions of communication practitioners’ involvement ranged from seeing the process as part of their functional role (i.e, creating and disseminating messages), to being one of several internal stakeholders who are equally represented in the process and, to ideas of active influence. At the same time, a few respondents downplayed the involvement of communication practitioners and even thought they should not be involved in organizational value setting. Most respondents however believe that no specific training or preparation, other than one’s individual life experience and upbringing, is required for one’s involvement in organizational value setting. Nevertheless most of the respondents believed that they possess the capabilities, skills and attributes required for involvement in the organizational value-setting process. These responses clearly indicate an interest, a willingness and a belief among communication

practitioners that they are capable and eligible to be involved in the organizational value-setting process. The variances seem to be based on how they perceived their roles as communication practitioners.

**6.8 Practitioners’ perceptions of their organizational roles**

To further examine how the respondents viewed their involvement in organizational value setting, it was useful to ask their perceptions of their own current roles. The respondents were asked questions on their key responsibilities, the nature of their interactions within the organization and their ideas about their influence.

6.8.1 Key responsibilities

When the respondents were asked to list down their current key responsibilities, the answers reflected the traditional duties associated with public relations and communication practitioners. Because the question was a multiple response question, the frequency of the responses appears in Table 6.15.

*Table 6.15 Respondents’ key responsibilities*

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Frequency*</b>
Employee/internal communication	19
Media/publicity	11
Community/corporate social responsibility	11
Issues management	9
Reputation/risk	7
External communication	7
Marketing	7
Management & business strategy	6
Government relations	5
Culture	4
Environmental communication	3
Crisis	3

*\* Respondents were asked to list their key responsibilities and all indicated multiple responsibilities.*

While employee and internal communication garnered the most mentions by the respondents, most of the other responsibilities reflected an external communication focus. However, the responses also revealed three new areas of responsibilities which have hardly been suggested in previous public relations/communication roles literature: management and business strategy, culture, and environmental communication. Despite being in the minority, these responses indicate that communication practitioner responsibilities seem to be extending beyond its traditional internal/external communication functions. They could also reflect a reverse encroachment pattern through their ‘intrusion’ into traditional enclaves of human resources, business management, and environmental studies.

When their responsibilities were analysed based on the manager/technician typology plus a leadership category (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Mintzberg, 1980; Berson & Avolio; 2004; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Heifetz, 1994), the responses revealed that all (30) of the respondents performed managerial roles. However seven reported managerial responsibilities only, while 12 of them performed managerial roles with technician roles, and seven performed managerial and leadership roles. Four respondents reported performing all three roles. For this study, leadership roles were extricated from its previous managerial classification. The breakdown is summarised in Table 6.16.

*Table 6.16 Breakdown of respondents’ roles based on manager/technician typology*

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>OVS*</b>
Managerial and technician roles	12	3
Managerial roles only	7	4
Managerial and leadership roles	7	6
All three roles	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>

*\* OVS refers to respondents involved in organizational value setting.*

As the table shows, a good number of the respondents reported undertaking managerial and technician roles, reflective of the multiple roles previously suggested. Furthermore, this multiplicity of roles extends to the addition of a leadership role, which four respondents indicated. Extricating the leadership activities from the managerial role is necessary in this context to examine how role perceptions impact on organizational value setting.

When the responsibilities of the 19 respondents who reported involvement in value setting were analysed based on the three role categories, more instances of leadership were suggested. But the leadership roles integrated with their enactment of managerial and technical roles, rather than the managerial roles. For example, Marie was able to convince that “certain words being better than others” while providing input as part of the senior management team, and also ensuring that the graphic presentations of the visual images were appropriate. Donna indicated involvement in the steering committee, having “sign-off” on the code of conduct content and design, and in the “feature opening and closing of the video”.

**6.8.2 Nature of interactions**

To assess the nature of the respondents’ working relationships within the organization, they were asked to describe the nature of their interactions with the business units/groups they normally liaised with on a day-to-day basis. The summary of their responses is presented below in Table 6.17.

*Table 6.17 Nature of respondents’ interactions with other business units*

<b>Nature of interactions</b>	<b>Frequency*</b>
Consultative	19
Persuasive	12
Approval	9
Collaborative	5
Advisory	5
Leadership/Driver	5
Informative	4
Negotiation	3
Gather information	2
Representation	1

*\*This was a question that allowed for multiple responses.*

While the table shows that the respondents described their interactions with other business units as primarily consultative, they also indicated a combination of different types of interactions depending on who they are interacting with. Kim’s response typified the situational nature of the respondents’ interaction.

For the business units, it's consultative and persuasive because basically I try to get their buy-in and then I try to bring them around to our line of thinking. I can't dictate anything. It depends on the project. Sometimes it's a supportive role, other times it's a leadership role. At the moment, I'm rolling out a global policy around the globe. Actually I've been the sole driver of that program with the company secretary. In other situations, I'm simply there to make sure the changes go through. In donations, I decide who we give money to. It's very autonomous. In other words, I don't need to get sign offs by lots of people. It's more negotiation. (Kim)

Sam's response similarly reflected how the nature of his approach would depend on the situation and who he's dealing with:

It depends, I'm a firm believer in trying to encourage I suppose consent processes. In simple terms, to explain it, I'd rather have 100% commitment to a 50% solution rather than a 50% commitment to a 100% solution. Because if you've only got 50% commitment, you're not going to get 100% solution anyway. But in some cases, where there would be reluctance to set in plain process, put in place processes that I believe need to be put in place, I'll demand that that happens. .... I've decided that the process of trying to get people to understand the need to do this themselves, because they're under so much pressure it's not going to happen so I need to step in and say, no you will need to do this and I'll help you to do it. (Sam)

### 6.8.3 Management or employee representative?

Some respondents such as Kara, Laura and Marie had earlier indicated how they serve the Executive Team as part of their key responsibilities. During the course of the interviews, eight respondents were asked an additional question which seemed necessary to follow up on some of their earlier responses. The question asked whether the respondents saw their role as a representative of management or employees. The responses were split, four saying they represented management, and the other four saying they represented both management and employees. Interestingly two of the respondents, Sam and Patricia paused for a long time to think, and then admitted that they have not previously considered the question. After much thought, however, they eventually responded they represent the management, as did two others respondents. And yet, several respondents expressed that more employees should participate more in the organizational value-setting process. But what was significant, although not totally surprising, was that none of those who were asked perceived themselves as representative of employees. This finding does not concur with Holtzhausen and Voto's (2002) study with 16 US practitioners who reported that their roles included representing employees and being the "voice of the people" (p. 72).

#### 6.8.4 Practitioner perceptions of their power and influence

The respondents were also asked the extent to which they think they were successful in influencing key stakeholders in the organization—namely, the CEO, the Board, senior management, middle management, employees and external stakeholders—to accept their recommendations. They were asked to use a scale: 5 (a great deal), 4 (a good deal), 3 (some), 2 (a little), 1 (not at all). Where respondents insisted on answering “not applicable”, their responses were coded a “0”. Table 6.18 summarises the responses of 25 respondents<sup>7</sup>.

Combining the responses in the second and third column reveals that most of the respondents perceived they have been generally successful in influencing the CEO (20), the senior (20) and middle management (19) and the employees (17) to accept their recommendations. Interestingly, many of the respondents felt they have not influenced the Board and a good number of them (10) said either they were not at all successful or did not intend to influence them at all.

*Table 6.18 Summary of respondents’ perceptions of their success at influence N=25*

<b>Influence with....</b>	<b>A great deal (5)</b>	<b>A good deal (4)</b>	<b>Some (3)</b>	<b>A little (2)</b>	<b>Not at all (1)</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>
CEO	14	6	4	1	0	0	25	4.3
Board	2	8	2	3	3	7	25	2.3
Senior management	11	9	4	1	0	0	25	4.2
Middle management	7	12	3	1	1	1	25	3.8
Employees	3	14	6	1		1	25	3.6
External stakeholders	2	9	4	1	1	6	25	2.7

The two respondents who said they have been successful with their influence efforts with the Board are in fact the two most senior practitioners who report directly to the CEO. The respondents’ relatively high degree of influence success among employees (17) compared to their success with external stakeholders (11) reveals a seeming shift towards a more internal communication focus. However most

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<sup>7</sup> These set of questions were only added in the final version of the questionnaire, after the interviews with the first five respondents have been completed, that is why the total number of respondents is 25. The additional questions were sent to five respondents by email but no response was received.



respondents in this study identified the CEO, senior management and middle management as their key ‘audience’ for their persuasive and influence efforts.

The next section presents the results of 19 respondents who reported involvement in organizational value setting against their perceived levels of successful influence with key stakeholders. However only 15 of the 19 responded to this question and Table 6.19 provides a summary.

*Table 6.19 Summary of respondents’ involved in organizational value setting and perceptions of their success at influence N=15*

<b>Influences the...</b>	<b>A great deal (5)</b>	<b>A good deal (4)</b>	<b>Some (3)</b>	<b>A little (2)</b>	<b>Not at all (1)</b>	<b>N/A (0)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>
CEO	10	2	3	0	0	0	15	4.5
Board	2	4	1	2	2	4	15	2.5
Senior management	7	5	3	0	0	0	15	4.4
Middle management	5	8	2	0	0	0	15	4.1
Employees	2	10	2	0	0	1	15	3.7
External stakeholders	2	5	2	1	1	5	15	2.4

The above table reveals that respondents involved in organizational value setting feel they have been successful in influencing the CEO and the senior management to accept their recommendations ‘a great deal’. They also think they have been successful in influencing middle management and employees to accept their recommendations ‘a good deal’.

The next table shows the responses of ten of the 11 respondents not involved in organizational value setting. In Table 6.20, eight of the ten respondents also believed that they have been successful in influencing the CEO (4) and senior management (4) in accepting their recommendations ‘a great deal’. And another four respondents in this group perceived that they have been successful at influencing the Board ‘a good deal’. Although not a lot of difference exists between the two groups, they show a slight difference in the focus between the employees (internal stakeholders) and the external stakeholders. The respondents who are involved in organizational value setting seem to believe they have been successful in influencing the employees much more than the external stakeholders. Whereas the respondents who

are not involved in organizational value setting seem to believe that they have been equally successful in influencing both employees and external stakeholders.

*Table 6.20 Summary of respondents' not involved in organizational value setting and perceptions of their success at influence N=10*

<b>Influences the...</b>	<b>A great deal (5)</b>	<b>A good deal (4)</b>	<b>Some (3)</b>	<b>A little (2)</b>	<b>Not at all (1)</b>	<b>N/A (0)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>
CEO	4	4	1	1	0	0	10	4.1
Board	0	4	1	1	1	3	10	2.2
Senior management	4	4	1	1	0	0	10	4.1
Middle management	2	4	1	1	1	1	10	3.2
Employees	1	4	4	1	0	0	10	3.4
External stakeholders	1	4	2	0	1	2	10	3.4

#### *6.8.4.1 Areas of most influence*

Another set of open-ended questions asked which areas of the business the respondents thought they had the most, and the least, influence. The results of these questions validated their responses to the previous question on their perceived effectiveness in influencing key stakeholders. Table 6.21 briefly summarises their responses.

*Table 6.21 Respondents' perceptions of business areas they most influence*

<b>Area of business</b>	<b>Number</b>
CEO/Leadership	14
Own department/work group	10
Across all units	5
No answer	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

The respondents gave different reasons for their perceived influence in these areas. Several respondents who nominated having the most influence with the CEO/Leadership group explained their influence on their relationships with them, the familiarity, and the proximity of their working and reporting relationships.

For example, while Kara pointed to her 'duty': "The executive, because I have the most contact, because my role is to serve them first so perhaps it's an issue of familiarity," Laura revealed her influence comes from working with the Senior Leadership team who "drive the communication that's leader driven".

Karen talked about the close working relationships she has with the leadership team.

With the managing directors and the regional president and the HR Director. With the HR director, it's because of proximity to the reporting relationship. I wouldn't have experienced that kind of influence in other organisational structures because we weren't together...I know it has many challenges but it also has some benefits as well. (Karen)

Mitch echoed the importance of good relationships of the communication group with the executive team as a key source of influence.

Collectively, I suppose, we have a great deal of influence in the MD level, office of the MD. Depends on the day, in terms of our HR operations sometimes we're terribly influential, sometimes we're not. And I think where we're most persuasive, we've got very good relations with the general managers or the executive team and so I think we have really good vibes at the higher level in terms of what we're trying to do. (Mitch)

While admitting to being influential with the CEO and Executive team, Marge cautioned on the use of the term 'influence'.

Our CEO told us, told the Corporate Affairs team on Thursday that internal communications is the most important that Corporate Affairs does. And I have his full support in anything that I do in terms of if I need, or are encountering a blockage, I can go to him. So I was thinking he agrees with me, he'll support me. Certain executive level, I have a lot of...influence is probably the wrong word...a good support...then I can go to them and say, "hey I think this is a good idea and you guys need to be doing this" generally they'll agree. (Marge)

Furthermore she explained that when she met some resistance, she'd fall back on the CEO's support and called on him to address the resistance.

If it's a big change that would just have to put the line guys going in and saying, "I believe we should be doing this," more often than not, they take what we say and they do what we say. And where that doesn't happen, that's where (name), our CEO "Well, no, I know that I would generally agree with what you've got to say so I'll support you" so we haven't, across the company, we have a reasonable level of influence. (Marge)

Marie found that she was influential among the groups of people who were ready for the change and encountered resistance among those who were not ready.

(I'd be influential)...in the areas where staff were already reasonably engaged or were ready to be engaged. For those people who were very resistant, you know saboteur type of staff, they found that what I was trying to do was so different and such a stretch that they couldn't even see how they could even make a start. They were the difficult ones. And in terms of dealing with the management, the guys who were managing the difficult team were less interested in

what I was doing because I think they just had enough problems. The guys who were building teams and had teams with people who were willing to be engaged and willing to accept change were very interested in what I was trying to do and helping me with it. (Marie)

For the respondents who felt they were most influential with their own departments or work groups, they reasoned that their communication expertise in reputation management, crisis and issues management, and employee communication provided them with organizational influence.

For example, Sam credited his responsibility to reputation, his technical skills plus his close relationship with the group executive for his influence.

...it's mainly my areas of influence mainly revolve around my area of responsibility in that anything involves the (company) reputation in a capital R sense involves me so all of the senior personnel both in the businesses and the corporate sense will come to me for my direction and advice on anything that might impact on the (company) reputation. Certainly the Managing Director, more the group executives, have quite a bit to do with the Chairman, and (name) will seek my advice around issues particularly at times when he will be speaking on behalf of the organization like the AGM, I write his speech for the AGM, I write his message in the annual report and if he's, for example, he's having a lunch and he's hosting politicians or media, he'll seek my advice. The other board members, I don't have anything to do with them in a personal sense. But all of the group executive members, I will have a close relationship. (Sam)

Hannah attributed her influence to her contributions to crisis and issues management while Karli, to her marketing communication expertise and Mandy to her input into corporate social responsibility. Kim believed her role as employee communications person plus the small size of the Head Office team allowed her to exercise some influence especially with her superior.

...in my role as employee comms person, well I can sit back and say that as an employee I wouldn't be happy with that, that doesn't sound quite right, we need to write it a little bit better or direct it a little bit better. That's my job. And I would lobby my manager, "you missed this, go back in" and so we send him back in. Then he would put my point of view up. It's a very small team in here, there's only 50 people in Head Office so in other words, I suppose we have the luxury of being able to go into the MD's office and say "that's not true," or "have you seen this" or "could we cut that" so it's a very good team in that it's contained. (Kim)

The few respondents who believed they have most influence across the organization credit their ability to work across all levels of the organization to their position and tenure (Tom for his seniority and Caitlin for her 'new insights'), and their work in internal/employee communication (Kim, Tess, Fiona).

When the respondents were given a list of choices of why they think they were influential, they mainly chose those that relate to their professional skills and knowledge as their perceived sense of influence.

Table 6.22 summarises the respondents' perceived source of influence.

Table 6.22 Respondents' perceived sources of influence

Attribute	Frequency*
Expertise – amount of knowledge in the area	19
Professional experience – no. of years working in area	18
Demonstrated performance in company – reliability	18
Excellent communication skills – persuasive, articulate, to the point	18
Integrity – trustworthiness	17
Personality	15
Seniority – length of service in the company	14
Academic qualifications	7
Gender	5

\* Respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses.

When they were asked for other reasons, the respondents cited credibility, return on investment and, experience from past work could be categorized as 'demonstrated performance in company' (7). The other reasons respondents gave for their influence include: their access to the CEO and/or report to influential manager (6); one's collaborative and consultative style (5); and, one's understanding of the complexity of the business and the needs of the stakeholders (3).

One's access to the CEO or reporting to an influential manager seemed to be a critical factor in the perceptions of the respondents' influence. Paul explained the *quid pro quo* relationship between CEO access and the individual's attributes.

Some of these figures in terms of being able to act directly and influence and so on can be supported by access to the President or the Chairman so it's like a Catch 22. So if you have those attributes, it gains you access. If you have that access, then those attributes are respected. You are perceived to have that influence. (Paul)

Similarly, Sam admitted that his access to the CEO lends to his 'aura' of influence: "I'm sure that people are well aware that I have direct access to the managing director so they know that on these matters I carry the imprimatur of the Managing Director."

Julie, on the other hand, expressed her strategy of influencing the CEO as her way of ensuring her ability to influence the organization.

If you want to influence the whole organization, then I'd work with the CEO. Because he perceives the importance of communication and a number of activities we do with (name of

department), he also sees them as priorities; as well as his own communication with staff. (Julie)

Five respondents reported their collaborative and consultative styles as sources of organizational influence. Patricia articulated the sentiments of the others, as well as those who identify understanding the stakeholders' needs.

I think it's probably more my personal style, it's to be consultative and understand what their needs are, not be...because I think that's the problem in the past is, that's the problem in a lot of corporates, people see you as the center and say "oh, it's corporate again putting stuff on me." Whereas what I tried to do is be a bit of an interface between corporate and those people so that I understand what you want and I understand what they want, and together we got to find a solution to meet those needs... (Patricia)

Organizational influence seems to also stem from some respondents' attempts to pre-empt or avoid any issues or problems. Kim rues how people who don't listen eventually "come running to you...and you'll fix up the problem anyway." Sam actually 'warns' his colleagues in the same vein.

And also the other thing which is a point I'm happy to make to all of those people, if they involve me in these issues, I in a sense take responsibility for them...if they don't and it blows up, then they're the one who's responsible and accountable. It doesn't mean that they don't share the responsibility but it does mean to say that they have to share the accountability as well.

Karli and Mitch emphasized that their key sources to organizational influence were understanding the business language, the customer focus and the complexities of the business.

#### *6.8.4.2 Areas of least influence*

On the question of their areas of least influence, the responses varied a great deal as they identified specific areas of the business. But the underlying theme in their responses seem to be that the areas where the respondents have the least influence is where they have least knowledge or expertise (eg Logistics, Finance, Operations) or no existing relationships (eg shop floors, call processing centers, exploration).

When they were asked whether they wanted to increase their influence in those areas, 15 respondents said 'no', 10 respondents said 'yes'. Four respondents were not asked this question because it was only added in the later version of the interview guide, and one did not respond. Those who did not want any more influence reasoned that they lack time, expertise and knowledge, or that there is no need, or the organizational structure and job differentiations do not allow for additional responsibility. Three respondents stressed that their current responsibilities are already demanding enough that they do not look favourably to extending their scope of responsibilities.

One of the more common themes coming out of those who did not want to increase their influence is their belief that they cannot make a difference or have a big enough contribution to make an impact. For example, Chloe said, “no, (I’m) busy enough already. Not areas where I can make a big contribution.” Kara concurred, “No because I have no time nor the scope to be able to do... I don’t see the need to get involved unless you’re going to make a big difference, just for the sake of it, doesn’t do anybody any good.” Paul echoed the impact of the difference additional influence means on efficiency.

It’s really a matter of making best use of resource but in areas where it’s unlikely to make any fundamental change to the organization, it’s no value, and best to work at probably a higher level, for example, take the view from the internal communication perspective, we have 4500 employees but you don’t have to do the 4500 employees, you deal with the top 100 so that’s the opinion leaders.

The structure of the role or the department and job differentiation also seem to affect the respondents’ perceptions of how they can extend their influence. For example, Sam argued that his organization’s restructure discouraged them to work beyond the scope of their job.

No, again given, again one of the things about the (company) culture and (company) structure is that the bureaucracy was cut to an extent that people are forced to focus on the things that they can really do something about. And you’re encouraged not to get involved in other areas. So I’d only want to do those things I can help in. (Sam)

Other responses that suggested a clear distinction of jobs as the reason for not wanting to increase their influence include: “we are very separate, we’ve got different jobs to do. I’ve been working with them on the annual report but they’re just giving me the information. They’ve got the figures and they’re figures they’re accountable,” (Caitlin); “we’ve got no reason to be involved,” (Hailey); and, “there’s someone else whose job it is to influence those areas...someone else within corporate relations” (Mandy).

Respondents who wished to increase their influence in areas where they currently have least influence offered a variety of reasons. Marge provided a commercial reason, to help “them to understand how our business is growing and how this fit into our strategy and basically, where we want to be as a company, is really important.” Justine meanwhile wanted to increase her influence in the operations area because she thinks it’s a “key leverage point for the change program” and she needs to lobby their support. Patricia on the other hand believed getting more influence with one side of the business which still doesn’t see community relations as a core part of their business, is part of her being ‘more effective’. She ruminated, “If we could be more influential then hopefully we can have some better outcomes”. She felt that the business does not “operate using the values as their guideline”.

The focus on engaging more employees on the ground was expressed by Kalli and Donna as part of their roles. For example, Kalli said, “The only thing is you can have separate values on paper but if your engaged workforce only goes this far...I think there’s a lot of opportunity to engage our workforce. And I feel that my role is partly to do that.” She then related a story of how an employee emailed the CEO to say that he used the company’s products for his own home. She also expressed a wish that her shop floor colleagues would approach her about their personal stories so she can include them in their company publication.

Donna’s interest in increasing her influence relates directly to the area of value change.

Yes, because values and behaviours I guess is a difficult concept for people to understand in writing and actually live in the best of times. So we, and because it’s a large organization, and focused on doing the doing, the tasks at hand...I think that in order for us to be successful at values and behaviours, we have to really help people to understand what they are, why we have them and how to make them live. Right down through the business as far as we can go. (Donna)

To sum up, this section demonstrated practitioners’ perceptions of their areas of influence as well as their perceptions of their roles as communication practitioners. More than half of those who responded to this question preferred not to increase their influence for several reasons including their lack of time, their lack of knowledge or expertise and their own perceptions of the parameters and scope of their jobs. And while in the minority, the ten who expressed an interest to extend their influence believed that they can actually become agents of change particularly in the values and cultures of their organizations. These responses support Scott-Ladd and Marshall’s (2004) conclusion that employees’ views on the gains of participation in decision making are negated by the accompanying increase in workload.

#### 6.8.5 Participation in the Dominant Coalition

Do the practitioner’s participation and/or membership in the dominant coalition determine one’s involvement in the organizational value-setting process? To find out the answers to this question, a series of statements (Questions 22 to 25 on final version of the Interview Questionnaire, Appendix 4) were put forward to the respondents where they can indicate their level of agreement using a Likert scale: 5 – a great deal, 4 – a good deal, 3 – some; 2 – a little, and 1 – not at all. Table 6.23 summarizes the results of the responses.

As Table 6.23 reveals, most of the respondents seem happy to informally talk to the dominant coalition about work-related issues (Questions 22 and 25, mean = 4.0 and 3.6 respectively) but not when it comes



to personal issues or attendance at social functions (Questions 23 and 24, mean = 2.4 and 2.0, respectively).

*Table 6.23 Summary of respondents' participation in the dominant coalition*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Agreement</b>	<b>OVS* (N=15)</b>	<b>NOVS* (N=10)</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=25)**</b>
<b><i>Q 22 Informally discuss work issues</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	3.9	4	4
	A great deal	7	6	13
	A good deal	4	1	5
	Some	2	1	3
	A little	2	2	4
	Not at all	0	0	0
				25
<b><i>Q 23 Discuss personal issues</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	2.6	2.4	2.4
	A great deal	0	1	1
	A good deal	2	2	4
	Some	5	0	5
	A little	8	5	13
	Not at all	0	2	2
				25
<b><i>Q 24 Attend outside socials</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	1.8	2.3	2
	A great deal	0	0	0
	A good deal	0	2	2
	Some	2	2	4
	A little	9	4	13
	Not at all	4	2	6
				25
<b><i>Q 25 Get advice on work problem</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	4	3.4	3.6
	A great deal	2	1	3
	A good deal	9	4	13
	Some	3	4	7
	A little	1	1	2
	Not at all	0	0	0
				25**

***5 A great deal 4 A good deal 3 Some 2 A little 1 Not at all***

*\*OVS refers to respondents who reported involvement in organizational value setting; NOVS refers to respondents who reported non-involvement in organizational value setting*

*\*\* This set of questions was added later and was not asked of the first five respondents.*

When comparing the responses between the respondents who reported involvement in organizational value setting against those who are not involved, it seems that involvement in value setting does not

have any bearing on one's participation in the dominant coalition. For example, two respondents who were not involved in organizational value setting said they attended informal social functions outside of work with members of the inner circle "a good deal". In the same manner, one respondent who didn't report being involved in organizational value setting said she informally talked about personal-related issues with members of the inner circle "a great deal". It must be noted that during the time of the interview, the particular respondent was in the process of relocating with her young family to her new regional post overseas.

#### *6.8.4.3 Perceptions of Value*

To assess the respondents' perceptions of how they were valued by the inner circle or dominant coalition, they were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements using a Likert scale (5 – a great deal, 4 – a good deal, 3 – some, 2 – a little, 1 – not at all). When the respondent did not provide a response, it was rated as "0". The summary of their responses is presented in Table 6.24. (These responses refer to Questions 26 to 32 in the final version of the Interview Questionnaire, Appendix 4.)

Table 6.24 shows that the respondents' perceive they are valued a good deal by the inner circle. In particular, the respondents perceived that the inner circle often solicits their public to the organization's success a good deal (mean=3.9). Both groups of respondents did not perceive themselves as participating in important decision-making meetings of the inner circle a good deal (mean = 3.3).

Table 6.24 also shows that the respondents perceived the inner circle to generally respect their work (mean = 4.2) and support their values a good deal (mean = 3.9) but not strongly support their work environment (mean = 3.5). Comparing the two groups shows how the respondents who are not involved in organizational value setting perceived that the inner circle supports them slightly more in the three areas than the group of respondents involved in organizational value setting. This result can imply that they are more satisfied or content with the status quo, while those involved in value setting while still generally happy with how they're valued, would like to get more support in their work environment and would welcome some changes. This finding supports Battilana's (2005, p. 666) proposition that individuals in higher formal positions in their organizations are more likely to undertake change.

Table 6.24 Summary of respondents' perceptions of value by inner circle

Activity	Extent	OVS* N=15	NOVS* N=10	TOTAL N=25**
<b><i>Q 26 Value PR over others' counsel</i></b>	Mean	3.8	3.9	3.7
	A great	5	3	8
	A good	5	4	9
	Some	3	3	6
	A little	0	0	0
	Not at all	0	0	0
	NA	2	0	2
		15	10	25
<b><i>Q 27 Opinion solicited</i></b>	Mean	4.2	3.6	4
	A great	5	1	6
	A good	8	7	15
	Some	2	1	3
	A little	0	0	0
	Not at all	0	1	1
		15	10	25
<b><i>Q 28 Participate decision making</i></b>	Mean	3.8	2.8	3.3
	A great	5	0	5
	A good	4	2	6
	Some	4	6	10
	A little	1	1	2
	Not at all	1	1	2
		15	10	25
<b><i>Q 29 Work tied to org success</i></b>	Mean	4.2	3.4	3.9
	A great	7	3	10
	A good	6	1	7
	Some	2	3	5
	A little	0	3	3
	Not at all	0	0	0
		15	10	25
<b><i>Q 30 Respects work</i></b>	Mean	4.2	4.3	4.2
	A great	4	6	10
	A good	10	2	12
	Some	0	1	1
	A little	1	1	2
	Not at all	0	0	0
		15	10	25

<b><i>Q 31 Supports my values</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	3.8	3.9	3.9
	A great	4	3	7
	A good	8	4	12
	Some	2	1	3
	A little	2	1	3
	Not at all	0	0	0
		15	10	25
<b><i>Q 32 Supports work environment</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	3	4.3	3.5
	A great	1	4	5
	A good	4	4	8
	Some	7	1	8
	A little	3	0	3
	Not at all	0	1	1
		15	10	25

**5 A great deal 4 A good deal 3 Some 2 A little 1 Not at all**

*\*OVS refers to respondents who reported involvement in organizational value setting; NOVS refers to respondents who reported non-involvement in organizational value setting*

*\*\* This set of questions was added later and was not asked of the first five respondents.*

## **6.9 Factors affecting practitioner involvement in the organizational value-setting process**

To determine whether certain factors affected practitioner involvement in the value-setting process, the respondents involved in organizational value setting were categorized in terms of demographic variables, such as age, gender, income, education and years of experience. Similarly the same process was applied for the respondents who are not involved in organizational value setting. The mean for the different factors were then calculated after which they were compared between the two groups. The results are summarised below in Table 6.25.

*Table 6.25 Group comparisons of respondents' average demographic variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>OVS</b>	<b>NOVS</b>
Average age range	35-44 years	35-44 years
Average annual income range	\$200,000+	\$100,000-199,999
Average level of highest educational qualification	Graduate diploma	Graduate diploma-master's degree
Average years of experience	16.33 years	15.14 years
Average distance from CEO (by levels)	1.79	2.59

The gender ratio between the two groups is 15 females to 4 males (OVS) and 7 females to 4 males (NOVS), which reveals that proportionally there are more than twice as many females than males among respondents involved in organizational value setting. Because the respondents are all Anglo-Saxon, race and ethnicity were not significant and for those who responded about religious background, all reported they were Christian.

Table 6.25 indicates there are no major differences between the two groups in terms of age, income range, and educational background. While the OVS group was slightly younger compared with the NOVS group, they also reveal a slightly higher average years of experience. This seeming anomaly may be explained by the fact that some of older practitioners may actually have clocked their years of experience outside of communication.

However, the respondents' reporting relationship, measured by the number of levels the practitioner is away from the CEO or the distance from the CEO, revealed significant differences between the two groups. The respondents involved in organizational value setting had a mean of 1.79, while the respondents not involved in organizational value setting had a mean of 2.59. This indicates that the respondents involved in organizational value setting tend to have a closer reporting relationship with the CEO compared to the respondents not involved in organizational value setting.

Organizational factors were also examined in terms of organizational culture and head office location. Other variables such as size were irrelevant because except for one which was medium sized, all of the respondents' organizations are considered large based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics classification. On the other hand, the industry sectors in which the respondents' organizations belonged were too varied to find any patterns.

When organizational cultures of the respondents' organizations were assessed based on the respondents' descriptions/definitions, they revealed that more than half were described as authoritative cultures. About a third were described as generally participative cultures. Two respondents described their cultures as 'commercial/customer-focussed' and 'people-focussed'. The responses are summarised in Table 6.26.

*Table 6.26 Group comparisons of respondents' organizational cultures*

<b>Type of organizational culture</b>	<b>OVS</b>	<b>NOVS</b>	<b>Total</b>
Authoritative	9	5	14
Participative	7	4	11
Combined	3	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>

As indicated earlier on the reasons why the respondents were not involved in organizational value setting, Table 6.27 confirms that respondents from organizations with an Australian head office are more likely to be involved in organizational value setting than respondents whose head offices are located overseas.

*Table 6.27 Group Comparisons of respondents' head office locations*

<b>Head Office Location</b>	<b>OVS</b>	<b>NOVS</b>	<b>Total</b>
Australian	14	3	17
Overseas	5	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>

To summarise, the results reveal that respondents with a closer reporting relationship to the CEO are more likely to be involved in organizational value setting than respondents whose reporting relationships with the CEO are more distant. The results also confirm the reasons that respondents previously gave that their non-involvement in organizational value setting is because organizational value-setting is usually undertaken in their overseas head offices which restricts their involvement.

## **6.9 Practitioners' perceptions of value alignment**

To assess how respondents perceived the alignment of their individual values with the organizational values, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three statements (Questions 43, 46 and 47, see Appendix 4). The results of their responses are summarised below.

Table 6.28 shows that most respondents reported their individual values are aligned with their organizational values. However the respondents who were not involved in the organizational value-setting process had a slightly stronger level of agreement (mean = 4.9) than the respondents who were involved in organizational value setting (mean = 4.1).

*Table 6.28 Respondents' value alignment*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agreement</b>	<b>OVS N=19</b>	<b>NOVS N=11</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><i>Q 43 Individual values align with organizational values</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	4.1	4.5	4.2
	<b>SA</b>	10	6	16
	<b>A</b>	7	4	11
	<b>N</b>	0	1	1
	<b>D</b>	0	0	0
	<b>SD</b>	0	0	0
	<b>NA</b>	2	0	2
<b><i>Q 46 Organizational values needed change and my input*</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	2.9	2.6	2.8
	<b>SA</b>	5	1	6
	<b>A</b>	3	2	5
	<b>N</b>	3	1	4
	<b>D</b>	5	6	11
	<b>SD</b>	0	1	1
	<b>NA</b>	3	0	3
<b><i>Q 47 Never experienced conflict of individual and organizational values*</i></b>	<i>Mean</i>	2.5	2.9	2.6
	<b>SA</b>	3	1	4
	<b>A</b>	3	3	6
	<b>N</b>	1	1	2
	<b>D</b>	7	6	13
	<b>SD</b>	3	0	3
	<b>NA</b>	2	0	2

\*These questions were worded in the negative.

**Scale: 5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly disagree**

When asked whether they thought the organizational values, or lack thereof, needed to be changed and required their input, more respondents did not agree with this statement which implies that most of them were happy with their current set of organizational values. The responses from each group bordered between disagree and neutral (mean = 2.9; 2.6). However among the respondents involved in organizational value setting, the sentiment over their organizational values was split, eight agreed and eight were either neutral or disagreed with the statement (three respondents did not respond to this question). This indicates that this group felt a stronger need to change their values and provide their input. Among the respondents not involved in organizational value setting, the results revealed more satisfaction with the current state of their organizational values, with eight respondents thinking the values didn't need to be changed against three respondents who thought they should.

On the question of whether they have never experienced conflicts between their personal values and their organizational values, more respondents (13) disagreed with this statement which indicates that most of the respondents have actually experienced conflicts. Comparing the two groups, the respondents involved in organizational value setting appear to have experienced slightly more conflicts between their personal values and their organizational values.

#### **6.10 Organizational values as a recruitment tool**

To find out how organizational values were perceived by the respondents in the recruitment process, they were asked their level of agreement to two statements (Questions 44 and 45). Their responses are summarised below on Table 6.29.

Based on the results summarised in Table 6.29, the respondents did not believe that the organization's values were influential in their decision to work for their respective organizations. Although they qualified their responses by saying that they had some idea of what the company stood for, in terms of its reputation, the respondents could not unequivocally say that the organizational values per se were instrumental in choosing to work for their respective organizations. Comparing the two groups however shows that the respondents who were not involved in organizational value setting reported higher levels of agreement with the two statements. This implies that they are more likely to know more about the organizational values and use this knowledge in their decision to take up employment in their organizations. This finding supports their earlier responses that state their satisfaction with the organizational values and did not see the need to change them.



Table 6.29 Respondents' views on organizational values and recruitment

Statement	Agreement	OVS N=19	NOVS N=11
<b>Q 44 Knowledge of organizational values before joining</b>	<i>Mean</i>	2.1	3.7
	<b>SA</b>	2	1
	<b>A</b>	2	5
	<b>N</b>	1	2
	<b>D</b>	8	3
	<b>SD</b>	2	0
	<b>NA</b>	4	0
<b>Q 45 Organizational values influential in my employment</b>	<i>Mean</i>	2.2	3.3
	<b>SA</b>	1	1
	<b>A</b>	4	5
	<b>N</b>	3	2
	<b>D</b>	4	2
	<b>SD</b>	3	1
	<b>NA</b>	4	0

*Scale: 5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly disagree*

## 6.11 Summary

This chapter presented evidence that the respondents in this study, who are current public relations and communication practitioners in Australia, are involved in the organizational value-setting process. However, the results also showed that most respondents' involvement in the process occurs at the dissemination and implementation stages. Only three respondents reported involvement in the group or committee that planned and managed the process. When analysed for factors affecting the respondents' involvement in the process, the study found that individual demographic factors hardly contributed to one's involvement in the process. But organizational factors, in particular the individual's reporting relationship and the location of the corporate head office, differentiated respondents' involvement in the organizational value-setting process. The results also revealed that the individual's perceptions and expectations of his or her role and their predominant perspective seemed to relate to their involvement

in organizational value-setting process. The most promising result found in this study is that despite the current involvement of top management, almost all the respondents were very interested in participating in the organizational value-setting process.

Furthermore when comparing respondents who were involved and not involved in organizational value setting, the analysis showed differences, albeit slight, in their job satisfaction, willingness to change, and conflicts between individual and organizational values. These findings suggest that practitioners who want to change their current status were involved in the organizational value-setting process, regardless of what stage their involvement may be.

So what do these results mean? How do these findings relate back to previous studies and what implications do these findings have to public relations scholarship, in particular to public relations roles? To see how these results are placed in the context of current theory, the next chapter will discuss the implications of the data and propose new ways of thinking about public relations roles.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter showed, the results from the interviews uncovered interesting insights about public relations practitioners' perceptions of their roles, influence and involvement in the value-setting process. The results also showed how organizational and individual factors interact with the practitioners' perceptions of their ability to undertake organizational value change.

Using the results presented in Chapter 6, this chapter aims to analyse, discuss and explain the different roles public relations and communication practitioners enact during the organizational value-setting process using a multiple perspective approach. In doing so, the chapter will frame the analysis based on previous literature and how the results of this research extend the extant theories and models.

The first section discusses the organizational value-setting process and how the respondents viewed their involvement. The next four sections will discuss the issues of perspective, agency, ethics, and leadership that were raised in this research which, in keeping with the dialectical nature of this research, will be presented as 'questions'. Following that, the next section explicates the three agency roles emerging from the analysis. And the final section proposes a framework for a new way of thinking about public relations roles.

### 7.2 Organizational value-setting process and culture change

To ascertain the roles of public relations and communication practitioners as organizational conscience, their involvement in the organizational value-setting process was explored. As some cultural scholars suggested, organizational cultures define the structures and processes of the organization (Cheney, et al., 2004).

#### 7.2.1 Value-setting process

As stated earlier, very little material on organizational value setting could be found in the current literature, despite the abundance of material on organizational culture change. Furthermore, most of the research on culture change has been on content rather than the process (Salama & Easterby-Smith, 1994). The results of this research contribute to increasing the knowledge in this area from a communication practitioners' perspective.

The research results support the concerns raised by Collins (cited in Henderson & Thompson, 2003, pp. 95-96) that most organizations focus too much time in the “drafting and redrafting the statement” phase of the organizational value-setting process. The study’s respondents’ reported involvement, which focussed on the implementation and dissemination stages of the organizational value-setting process, reflects a limited view of the communication role by the organization and the practitioners themselves.

### 7.2.2 Stage of involvement in value-setting process

In Collins’ (in Henderson & Thompson, 2003) conception of the value creation process, there were only three phases—identifying core values, drafting and redrafting the statement, and creating alignment. In reconstructing the value-setting processes based on the descriptions of the respondents in this study, six stages were identified including planning and evaluation phases.

While many management writers (Collins, cited in Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2002; Barrett, 2005) strongly advocate an alignment of individual values with organizational values, they seem to differ in which stage the alignment occurs. For example, in Barrett’s (2005) value alignment process, his focus is on what is equivalent to Stages 1 and 2 in Figure 6.1. In the models described by Henderson and Thompson (2003), which are drawn from Collins’ conception and Sullivan et al. (2002), alignment occurs after the identification of the organization’s values.

In Figure 6.1, the identification phase differs based on whether the approach for the process is going to be top down (organizational values identified by top management), bottom up (organizational values identified by employees), or across the board (employees of all levels assess organizational values vis-à-vis individual values). Three respondents (Sam, Marge and Donna) mentioned two additional stages not mentioned elsewhere, which are the planning and creation of the process, and the evaluation of the process.

This analysis reveals two dimensions to the approaches for identifying organizational values—management/employee participation, and organizational vs individual values. Furthermore, it is important to define to what extent and at what stage individual values are integrated in the process. If the individual values are introduced only after the organizational values have been identified, the process seems to suggest that individuals are expected to modify their individual values and subsequent behaviours to suit and comply with the predetermined organizational values. If the individual values are used in the first stage as part of processing and determining the organization’s values then it reflects a more participative and collaborative process. The next question is whose individual values are

incorporated? One approach used by some of the respondents' organizations is to frame the organizational values based on the individual values of the CEO and/or the senior leadership team as in the case of Tom's organization. Another approach mentioned by the respondents is to include as many employees from all levels and all units of the organization as in the case of Donna's company. Another approach is to include only the middle management level employees and above in the process as illustrated by the case of Kara's organization where the value change process was cascaded from the top 100 executives to the next 200 managers and then again to the next 300 'people managers'. The 'people managers' were then made responsible to disseminate the information to their teams.

These various approaches to the values identification process are important to understand where, when, and how the communication practitioner can be involved and the extent to which he or she can influence the organizational value-setting process and consequently engender value change within the organization. Furthermore, the stage in which the communication practitioner is involved determines the kind of role he or she enacts in the process.

### 7.2.3 Involvement in organizational value setting indicates practitioner role

As mentioned earlier, the research process started off with a view to examining whether public relations/communication practitioners enacted the organizational conscience role by focusing on their involvement in the organizational value-setting process. As such, the interviews were undertaken with this context in mind. However when the data were collected, analysed and re-analysed based on the existing literature, it became apparent that there were two other roles which practitioners enacted, of which they were most likely unaware. These three agency roles are described in the final section of this chapter.

The question that arises from this finding is whether the different stages of the value-setting process offer the communication practitioner an opportunity to exercise a conscience role. Or are the opportunities to exercise a conscience role limited by the stage in which the practitioner is involved?

Most of the respondents' reconstruction of the organizational value-setting process however ends at the dissemination and engagement stage. What the reconstructed process fails to mention are the planning and evaluation phases of the actual process in which a few respondents indicated involvement. One's involvement in the planning of how to manage and implement the value-setting process provides several opportunities for intervention and influence especially in designing the conduct of the process.

Moreover, being involved in planning the process allows the practitioner to contribute to, and consequently influence, how the results of the process will be interpreted and reported.

But as the results showed, most of the respondents are involved in the implementation phase of the value-setting process. This finding supports previous literature that stresses the importance of communication in the implementation phase of the change process (Lewis, 1999). In Lewis' (1999) terms, however, implementation includes activities such as “the formation of implementation teams, announcement of change programs, selection and training of users, development and communication of new performance criteria, and assessment of implementation outcomes” (p. 44). From this conception, it seems that the even the practitioners reporting involvement in the planning process may be construed as ‘implementers’.

#### 7.2.4 Key players in the process

The findings also revealed how the organizational value-setting process is generally driven and owned by the CEO, the Leadership Team, and the Human Resources department, either individually or collectively. While a few respondents expressed preference for a more participatory and democratic view to the process by suggesting the inclusion of employees, most of the respondents still believed that the top management team should influence organizational value-setting process.

Most of the organizations represented in this study had an executive with responsibility for communication who was a member of the top management team. However in some cases, this function was combined with Human Resources, and in other cases with Marketing. Because organizational value setting does not belong to the traditional suite of public relations responsibilities may explain why the involvement of the respondents in the process is rather limited. The current areas of practice and educational preparation include an already extensive scope such as media relations, community relations, crisis and reputation management, and internal communication. At the same time, the current state of public relations education and training highlights the potential opportunities for practitioners to make a significant contribution to the development of the organizational conscience role.

However the results suggest that other factors are involved in how public relations and communication practitioners perceive their role and their potential to enact an organizational conscience role. The next sections discuss these factors and are presented here as questions.

### **7.3 A question of perspective**

Could the predominance of respondents reporting involvement at the implementation stage of the process reflect the predominance of the functionalist perspective among practitioners? Surely it can be argued that practitioners are only ‘allowed’ by their management to be involved in the implementation stage of the organizational value-setting process. However, such an argument reflects an acceptance by the practitioner that the managerial/functionalist perspective is the dominant paradigm that is appropriate. That acceptance and deferral contradict the whole notion of role-making earlier discussed.

As previously suggested, the managerial/functionalist perspective has undoubtedly informed public relations research and practice over the last 30 years. Consequently, predominant thinking is carried over in business, by managers who hire public relations practitioners, and in academia, by academics who teach, and higher education bureaucrats who decide on the viability of public relations educational programs. To some extent, this approach to talk in the same language as the critical decision-makers has achieved some success. Management scholars now acknowledge the value of communication and public relations practitioners beyond mere promoters and defenders of their brand (see Handy in Elmer, 2001).

In so doing however, the predominant perspective in public relations scholarship and practice has inevitably coloured the way individual practitioners think and behave. The results of this research showed that most of the respondents subscribe to the predominant managerial/functionalist perspective and the question now is whether this predominant perspective has in fact constrained the respondents’ ability to engender value change.

#### 7.3.1 Individual’s worldview

How the individual makes sense of the world around him or her is defined by his or her predominant worldview or perspective. Grunig and White (1992) defined worldviews as a set of assumptions that practitioners “have about such things as morality, ethics, human nature, religion, politics, free enterprise, or gender” (p. 32). Worldviews are subjective, abstract and help create images about the world that guide behaviour (Grunig & White, 1992) This study found many of the respondents held a predominantly managerial/functionalist worldview based on their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. How they defined their primary ‘audience’ indicated this worldview. In fact, one of the significant findings in this research is that many respondents revealed that their primary target audiences are the executive team, the CEO, or their immediate superior who reports to the CEO. Respondents such as Kara outrightly declared that their persuasion targets usually are their superiors or

CEOs. And yet, this specific segment of internal audiences is not discussed extensively in any communication or public relations textbook or class. Unless one studies organizational communication and politics or management behaviour, the public relations student will assume that the internal stakeholders will primarily be the employees and that the practitioner is representing management. While most public relations scholarship discuss the importance of being a member of the dominant coalition, and that research, through issues management and environment scanning, holds the key to practitioners' entry to the inner circle, very little research has touched on practitioners' defining upper management as their primary audience. Aside from O'Neil (2003b) who acknowledged that very little is "known about public relations practitioners attempt to persuasively influence senior management" (p. 160), practitioner publications are already discussing how practitioners need to build relationships with the CEO (Czinege, 2005).

Recent studies (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) however, including this one, have shown that some practitioners are exhibiting elements of activism and acting on behalf of the employees rather than the management. While some practitioners in this study have suggested engaging in robust debates and discussions, providing candid assessments on management policy, and even critiquing some management decisions, they also admitted that this influential role is possible only because of the nature of their relationship with the CEO and executive leadership team. They can exercise influence with the CEO because the practitioners serve and support the CEO. Equally, the CEO shows the practitioner respect and value by giving them direct access, soliciting their advice, and articulating support for the communication function and team. This reciprocity is critical to the relationship between the communication practitioner and the CEO.

The respondents also cautioned that this kind of relationship is only possible if the CEO has a progressive and open mind and is genuinely willing to listen. Some respondents in this study reported that their CEOs preferred to own the value-change process, believing it is solely their responsibility.

### 7.3.2 Perspective defines role expectations

Another question raised in this research relates to the kind of expectations public relations/communication practitioners have of their own roles.

As earlier proposed, if communication practitioners do not see themselves as the organizational conscience, how can they expect others to see them in that role? This relationship of 'own' position to the 'alien' position (Biddle, 1979) seemed to be a major consideration in how the respondents defined



their own roles, responsibilities and boundaries. When the practitioners mentioned that they would rather not increase their influence in areas where they had least influence, they reasoned that it was outside of their sphere of influence. Furthermore, a few respondents mentioned how they, in their dealings with other business units, tended to give advice but usually left the decision to implement their advice with the business because the 'businesses need to be accountable'. In effect, the communication practitioners in this study tended to relegate accountability to the appropriate business units because that was either defined in their restructured positions or expected of the business units.

While this view is understandable from the context of the business unit having ownership and accountability, it also places the communication practitioner in a detached, objective advisor role. There are advantages and disadvantages to this model of public relations practice and it could depend on the nature of the business and the structure of the organization. From an engagement or involvement context where emotional attachment is helpful, the seeming detachment may be seen as problematic. Translating values into behaviors requires emotional commitment to the process and to the values. When other employees do not see the practitioner's passion and commitment to the process, it is very difficult to convince them to follow suit (Vallerand & Houliort, 2003; Jones et al., 2003). When practitioners have not internalised their organization's values themselves, they will have difficulty endorsing the values of the organization. As many of the respondents verbalised, living values are more important than 'mouthing' values.

The point to make here is that practitioners are in a position to make and define their roles according to how they see fit (Graen, cited in Johnson, 1989). They are not merely 'role-takers' but also 'role-makers'. This notion of role making supports the view of human agency, that the individual has the power and ability to construct his or her own meaning from which to make decisions. But how do practitioners define their roles? Where do their conceptions of a normative role come from? How are their perceptions developed?

### 7.3.3 Perspective defines perceptions of self and others

Many of the respondents in the study saw themselves as extensions if not representatives of senior management. Despite five respondents suggesting that employees should influence the organizational value-setting process, the majority of respondents still felt that senior management should provide the overriding influence in the process.

During the interviews, several of the respondents mentioned ‘two-way symmetrical communication’ as the ‘ideal’ model of public relations practice and communication. This terminology came from Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of public relations which has been written about and presented in many publications and conferences. The integration of the academic terminology into the respondents’ language indicated that most of the respondents in the study have developed their role expectations and perceptions from the dominant scholarship, either through education or workplace socialization. Significantly missing in their discourse however are the subsequent critiques of the two-way symmetrical model that exist in academic literature. The absence of the critical perspective in their discourse is not unexpected however.

Communication practitioners with predominantly functionalist perspectives see themselves as agents for someone else, in this case the CEO and/or the dominant coalition. As the results of this study show, many of the respondents in this study reflected this perspective and defined their structural relationships with other members in the organization. Within this perspective, the practitioner aims to develop positive relationships with different organizational members, and in the process bank on the goodwill generated from these positive relationships when required. This notion of reciprocity—trying to repay in kind what another person has given (Cialdini, 1993, cited in Gass & Seiter, 2003)—reflects a persuasive tactic that could also be attributed to social exchange theory. Social exchange theory “seeks to explain human action by a calculus of exchange of material or information resources” (Monge & Contractor, 2001, p. 458) and is reflected in the relationships the respondents have with their CEO and other organizational members. Furthermore, the practitioners’ central location in the organizational network appropriates them a certain level of power because of their access to resources and information.

In the same manner, the questions of loyalty to one’s superior or organization or colleague may be drawn from this concept. As several respondents intimated, the CEO gives them direct access with the assumed expectation that they will toe the party line. Kalli’s story however of the CEO giving her her favourite chocolate biscuits indicated an effort on the CEO’s part to recognize her role in the organization. This seemingly small gesture of acknowledgement must have impressed Kalli enough to mention it during the interview. Furthermore, practitioners with a predominant functionalist mindset tended to view themselves as having very limited capabilities within the organization. Because they defined themselves based on their structural relationships and on what is ‘given’ to them as dictated by their function, these practitioners did not see themselves as individuals who can push boundaries. They perceived their main objective is to promote stability by performing their managerial functions.

A communication practitioner whose view of his or her role is to interpret, mediate and translate the organization's policies, may do so either on behalf of the management or the employees, or both. As some respondents revealed, they focused on the content of the corporate discourse either in its production or interpretation and used participative mechanisms in the guise of consultation. Key to the practitioner's interpretive base is his or her predominant worldview and a clear understanding of purpose or motive. When practitioners consult with other organizational employees, for example in identifying individual values vis-à-vis organizational values, are they finding justification for the management's values, are they genuinely finding out what the employees think, feel and believe about their organizations, or are they projecting their own values?

Communication practitioners who value a dialectical process within the organization engage all members of the organization. A few respondents reported that some of their CEOs expected this of them in their role as communication practitioners. But very few also admitted to enacting this role regularly. In these cases, the respondents attributed this opportunity to a progressive minded CEO who is genuinely interested in knowing various sides to the story and stories—not just the 'good news' stories. One respondent narrated her organization's recent crisis as a result of a 'good news' culture where 'bad news' was filtered by the middle managers thereby leaving top management unaware of the real problems occurring in the organization.

Thus it is useful to think about Weick's (2001) view on enactment and how individual enactment drives perceptions, "Enactment drives everything else in the organization. How enactment is done is what an organization will know" (p. 187). How others perceive the communication practitioner is largely dependent on what and how practitioners enact their roles.

#### 7.3.4 Ethical practice is rhetorical, critical and systemic

While there may be problems with a predominantly systems view of public relations (Creedon, 1991; Johnson, 1989), which includes such terms as managerial, functionalist and instrumentalist, the reality is that we live in a still rather organised world; a world organised by systems—both ecological and man-made. The advancements in modern technology, specifically communication technology, have blurred previously distinct geographical boundaries and at the same time, created greater communities and systems. Public relations and communication practitioners live and operate in such environments.

Systems theory's focus on the whole and its parts frames the premise of this research in suggesting that the individual practitioner, as a part of a system, can impact the system in which he or she belongs. The choice of role theory as an integrating concept also reflects a systemic bias because individual practitioners' ability and effectiveness to function within a system is facilitated by one's understanding and knowledge of his or her role.

However as role theory suggests, how others in the system interpret and construct expectations of the individual practitioner guide how the practitioner performs a certain role. As some of the respondents suggested, they did not want to increase their influence in areas where they felt they could not make a significant impact anyway. This kind of response indicates not only an understanding of the boundaries in which they should operate but also an acknowledgement of the expectations from their superiors of the limits of their roles. Furthermore, as this study's respondents revealed, there are several layers of subsystems and co-systems in which the individual respondents belong and thereby, enact varying roles. As Marge reiterated, her involvement in the value-setting process was due to her senior management level hat rather than her corporate affairs role.

If defining one's role and function within a system is derived from others' expectations of the role, how are these expectations relayed to the individual practitioner? An individual's expectations of his or her role are combined with the expectations one receives from others which are framed within the context of language. This discursive process assists the members of that system to make sense of the elements within that system, and this discourse can take various forms from one-way message transmissions to participative dialogue as well as passionate discussions.

As several respondents mentioned, part of their role is to interpret and bring meaning to the organizational values. The assumption of course is that the communication practitioner is well equipped and sensitive enough to accommodate the various interpretations that result from a more diverse and heterogeneous workforce. While some respondents referred to keeping true to the process by ensuring the words generated by the employees in the focus groups were not changed, it is also possible that some practitioners interpreted the values in their roles as agents for management.

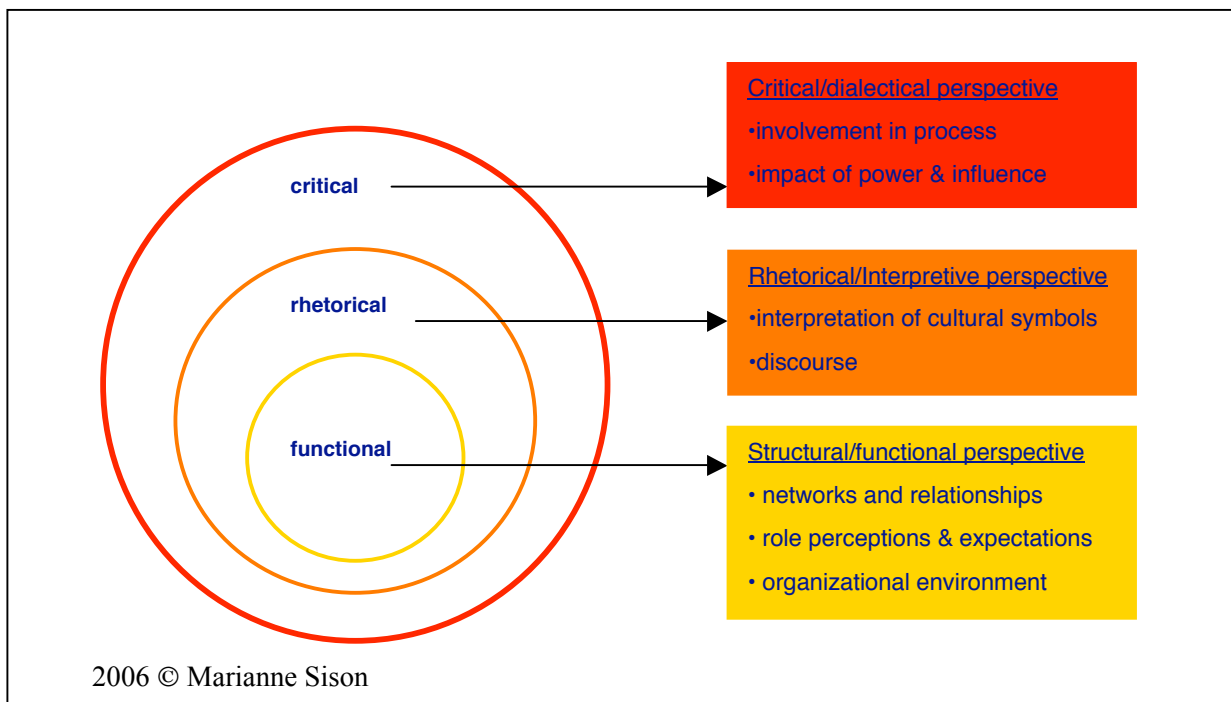
In addition to a diverse and heterogeneous workforce, communication practitioners have to deal with complex information sources as well as highly educated, increasingly sceptical, more sophisticated and more media-knowledgeable individuals. This complex environment requires an understanding of the power relationships in the work environment.

As communication practitioners are caught in the middle of these tensions between management and employees, understanding one's role within this complexity through various lenses is a useful start. The dialectical analytical process as defined by Benson (1981) is a useful approach because while it looks at wholes, it "stresses the partial autonomy of the components" (p. 266). It looks at the parts of the whole system and examines the tensions between those parts. The tensions between those parts may be a reflection of the need to change, which then leads to a reconstruction of the system for a better outcome.

7.3.5 Roles research requires multiple perspective approach

As the results of this study show, many facets of public relations roles emerge when subjected to a multiple perspective analysis.

*Figure 7.1 Multiple perspectives approach to studying public relations roles*



Exploring roles research through a systems theory perspective provided an understanding of the relationships between organizations and their environments, organizations and the individuals within those organizations, networks and structures. Further, applying the instrumentalist or functionalist approach common within this perspective allowed an understanding of the concepts of organizational effectiveness, the superior-subordinate relationship, and the tensions brought about by self-interest. In

particular, public relations/communication roles are examined based on questions that asked respondents to describe their responsibilities, reporting relationships, and positions in the organization.

A critical perspective provided an understanding of the concepts of power, control and influence by individuals and by the organization, between individuals, by the organization on individuals and how individuals may wittingly or unwittingly exert power and influence. To this end, public relations/communication roles were examined through the respondents' perceived power and influence within the organization, factors they believed affect their influence, and through identifying potential areas of tension and possibilities for changing the current paradigm.

An interpretive cum rhetorical perspective assisted in understanding how practitioners use discourse in defining their roles and how they perceive others' expectations of their role. Furthermore, this approach explains the meanings that underpin the relationships within the networks and structures of the organization. Examining the content and the manner of discourse used by the practitioners provides additional meaning to the conversation. When others deem power as a perception, then power becomes a concept whose meaning is dependent on people's interpretations. Furthermore, incorporated in this perspective is how the practitioners integrate dialogic communication in their professional practice.

So for example, when the respondents were asked whether they thought public relations/communication practitioners should be involved in value setting, most of them responded in the affirmative but their answers differed in the nature and level of involvement they believe they should have.

From a systems functionalist approach, these differences in answers can be interpreted as their understanding of the limitations brought upon by their positional and structural boundaries. Which means that a public relations/communication practitioner may feel that value setting is not within the parameters set out in his/her position description and therefore believes it shouldn't be expected of them.

From a critical approach, the variation can be interpreted based on the practitioners' perception of either having more power or, as in the case of Patricia, ensuring that the other employees do not see communication practitioners as having any more power. The respondents who preferred not to drive the process felt that it was best to devolve the power and the resulting ownership to people other than themselves, or entrust the power to their superiors. Relinquishing power does not necessarily mean that the respondents did not want to get involved in the process, but rather that they are not 'seen' to drive

the process. This could be interpreted as the respondents' preference to remain as an 'unseen' power—a condition that currently exists in many organizations anyway (Stauber & Rampton, 1995). Whether this motivation to work 'behind the scenes' is a form of subterfuge which negates the virtues of transparency and openness, or a more realistic and expedient way to 'get things done' without having to deal with the complexity of a sceptical workforce remains to be seen. This question perhaps would be worth further exploration in future research.

From an interpretive perspective, the difference of responses could indicate various interpretations of 'involvement'. Some practitioners may prefer to be more passive and some may be more active. These kinds of reactions can be determined by several factors including their personalities as well as their commitment and passion for engendering ethical and socially responsible behaviour. Many of the respondents emphasised the need for 'living' the values, or attaching certain behaviours that demonstrated both management and staff's understanding of the meaning of the organizational values. So in a sense, one could argue that actions, especially by the leadership of the organization, are perceived as more powerful symbols than words and images that tout organizational values—a view that Larkin and Larkin (1994) have strongly voiced.

To sum up, how practitioners enact and perceive their roles is indeed a question of perspective. While the results illustrated the dominance of a singular perspective which colours and constrains the respondents' view of their individual potential, the multiple perspective approach to roles research highlights how practitioners and scholars must temper the idealism of critical thought with the realism of the functional perspective. As this discussion suggests, the breadth and depth of one's role may be construed as a function of structure or individual agency, or both. How an individual's perspective is developed is also framed by one's attitude to learning. Communication practitioners traditionally known to be knowledge managers and experts could explore the other end of the wisdom spectrum in their enactment of individual agency. As such it is argued that future public relations practice and scholarship needs to be viewed within the context of multiple perspectives. This multiple perspectives approach works well within the context of globalization and the resulting diversity of worldviews as well as within the context of complexity of the practice itself and the environment in which it operates.

#### **7.4 A question of agency**

As earlier proposed, the results of this research showed the importance of studying public relations/communication practitioners' roles through the human agency perspective. Following Giddens's structuration theory (2002) which suggests that agency and structure are mutually dependent,

the communication practitioner has the ability to ‘make society’ or create the structure, and yet on the other hand is constrained by that same structure.

The research results revealed this tension among the respondents especially in their involvement in the organizational value-setting process. Some practitioners have expressed their ability to engage in robust discussions with their colleagues and even their supervisors, as in the case of Patricia and Kim, and yet their large manufacturing industry environments inhibited them from extending their opportunities to do more. While they are able to exercise some reflexivity and dialectical processes within their small groups and only among people with whom they already have good working relationships, these two practitioners admitted that they have not tried nor would want to extend this activity to groups where they have no influence.

Moreover, most of the respondents still predominantly viewed themselves as agents acting on behalf of their senior management. A couple of respondents saw their primary role and duty is to support if not serve the CEO and the Executive Team. For example, Kara talked about her role to serve the Executive Team first and how she is definitely a hands-on representative of the Executive Team. Laura proffered the same view when she articulated that her main client is the CEO. This affinity and mutual support however also indicated a source of influence, as Kara suggested. She intimated that her familiarity with the Executive Team made her quite influential with them.

But have there been instances when the respondents were able to exercise human agency through choice, dissent, and autonomy? Some respondents narrated incidents in their respective organizations when they were engaged in robust debates, discussions and arguments. For example, Sam’s organization encourages employees to speak up and Sam personally finds debates stimulating and the lack of debates unhealthy. Karen said that her organization theoretically encourages debate but has not done much of it. However she said that in her corporate communication group, she does push the boundaries with her staff and this practice has found its way up to the management especially after realising that the debates are not meant to threaten or undermine anyone, but to change the organization for the better.

#### 7.4.1 Professionalism, loyalties and conflicts

Another question emerging from this research is the question of professionalism vis-à-vis loyalties and role conflicts. As discussed earlier, professional practice implies a level of autonomy in which the practitioner can think for himself or herself based on his or her interpretation of a set of ethical



standards (Bivins, 1987). Similarly, autonomy has been related to moral development (Piaget, cited in Duska & Whelan, 1977). Wright (1989) similarly equates autonomy to moral and ethical maturity.

The varying responses suggested different orientations regarding professionalism. For example, Kara and Laura expressed their loyalty and professionalism by way of 'servitude' to the CEO and the Executive Team. Paul and Sam, on the other hand, believed it is part of their professional responsibility to provide honest and truthful views to the CEO. In both instances, the respondents are rewarded by access and influence to the senior leadership group.

One of the difficulties posed by this proximity to and reciprocity with the senior management is the potential lack of autonomy. How can one resist or argue against someone who has been extremely supportive? How can one exercise one's opinion especially if it is the odd one out within the dominant coalition?

According to Bivins (1987), the practitioner will need to call on his or her professional standards and stature to assert his or her viewpoint. Being silent or not articulating one's opinion can be regarded as being remiss of one's professional requirements. As Giddens (2002) argues, the practitioner as agent should think about "acting otherwise either in the form of intervention or forbearance" (p. 233). As few respondents revealed, they have been involved in several debates with senior management and colleagues, and in some cases they win and in some cases they lose. As Sam put it, "but we do encourage people to speak up when they've got concerns to speak and say that...I sometimes win and I sometimes lose. It's generally a compromise."

Does an individual's ability to practise autonomy depend on certain factors such as the practitioner's age, gender, length of service and experience, seniority of position, relationship with the CEO, and organizational culture? While this research did not examine the relationship of these factors with autonomy, it did look at factors affecting the practitioner's influence which in some way leads to some level of autonomy. However, a few respondents did suggest that how the communication role is conceived, for example as a support for the Executive Team or as the CEO's 'eyes and ears', may indicate how much autonomy the practitioner can exercise. For example, Kara expressed that her role to "serve them (the Executive Team) first" and her familiarity with them gives her some leverage. Kim, who switches between supportive and leadership roles depending on the project, said that in some instances she is the "sole driver of that program with the company secretary. In other situations, I'm

simply there to make sure the changes go through. In donations, I decide who we give money to. It's very autonomous. In other words, I don't need to get sign offs by lots of people."

As reported in the preceding chapter, some respondents have indicated having experienced conflicts within the organization, and a few qualified their responses by saying that it was not necessarily the organization, but a person or a personality within the organization. Explaining the context of a previous conflict reflected organizational loyalty and professionalism especially because as Stoker (2005) suggested, voicing one's concerns demonstrates loyalty to one's responsibility.

The point here is that professionalism and loyalty do not necessarily require agreement and servitude. On the contrary, it seems that demonstrating their independent and critical thinking through their performance, not their positions, have earned some of the respondents the respect of their superiors and their colleagues. According to Goodpaster (2004), "loyalty can be an excuse for selective perception and narrowed judgement" (p. 3) and is often "one of the privileged features of a decision-making situation". If communication practitioners viewed critical discourse in the context of loyalty, professionalism and responsibility, then perhaps they will experience fewer role conflicts.

## **7.5 A question of ethics**

Examining the conscience role through practitioner involvement in organizational value setting inevitably leads to questions about ethics, in particular how practitioners construct the concept of ethics. As Fitzpatrick (1996) had previously asserted, public relations practitioners are not involved in the institutionalisation of ethics. In this study, the conscience role was regarded as the ethical role, and practitioners' enactment of the conscience role was operationalized by how practitioners contributed to the values development process in their organizations.

While the results revealed that most respondents were involved in the organizational value-setting process, their involvement is limited to the development and implementation of communication strategy, which offers practitioners little opportunity for intervention and the exercise of conscience. At this stage, the values have already been set and the communication practitioners' role is simply to support the decisions made by others through the development of message content and channels to disseminate the information or policy. While the choice of words and channels may offer some opportunity for exercising conscience, especially in the context of rhetorical enactment (Heath, 1992), the practitioner's opportunities become limited when the values have been set. As a few respondents said, they would rather not change the wording of the values especially when the word choice involved

the employees. The respondents felt it was important that the participating employees saw the result of their participation and retain ownership of the value-setting process.

Some of the respondents in this study believed that adherence to the process is considered ethical practice. Others believed that adherence to rules, compliance to the codes of ethics, and support of the management line reflected ethical practice. Most however believe that adherence to their professional values reflects ethical practice. Following Moral Law (Rachels, 2007), individuals are moral when they follow the law, adhere to the standards, or to the company's codes of ethics. Extending this premise to the current study, does it mean that communication practitioners are moral if they follow their organizational rules and corporate codes of conduct? Following this logic, any practitioner who complies and adheres to the rules would be considered an ethical practitioner.

While previous studies (Wieland, 2005; Muijen, 2004; Pater & Van Gils, 2003) have shown that compliance programs cannot address corporate social responsibility and corporate governance issues, others (Weaver et al., 1999) have shown that the top executive team's commitment to, and not just awareness of, ethics determines the organization's orientation towards control and compliance. Furthermore, in organizational change situations, enforcement and compliance have not proven to be effective (Ogbonna & Harris, 1998). In addition, business ethics is increasingly seen as being beyond mere compliance of the law and more about stakeholder engagement (Cannon, 2006).

Instead, what seems to work in organizations is an orientation towards values rather than an orientation towards compliance. A compliance approach to ethics "focuses on preventing, detecting, and punishing violations of the law" while a values orientation builds on "personal self-governance and is more likely to motivate employees to behave in accordance with shared values" (Paine, cited in Treviño et al., 1999, pp. 135-136). The organizations in this study reflected both orientations, although the amount of resources organizations put into the process including, the time of some of respondents in the study, indicates a greater tendency toward the value orientation. However, some organizations whose processes include a clear performance-based measurement that is linked to the enactment of behaviours consistent with organizational values reflect a more compliance orientation.

Another view on public relations ethics distinguished between ethics, what is 'good', with legal issues, what is 'right' (Wright, 1989). Wright (1989) believed that despite organizations and individual practitioners regulating themselves by professing to a code of ethics, "ethical decision-making in our field will continue to rest in the laps of individual practitioners" (p. 4). Furthermore, he contended that

it is the individual's ability to make his or her own ethical judgements and "formulate moral principles" rather than conform to other's moral judgements that characterise ethical and moral maturity (Wright, 1989, p. 20). This view however assumes that the individual practitioner can make the discernment between 'good' and 'right' on his or her own. Brown and Treviño (2003) cautioned however, that individual practitioners, as transformational leaders, can "use their power to manipulate followers, advance their own self-interest and reinforce their own power and dominance" (p. 165). Thus, it is argued that public relations and communication practitioners require ethical education and training. Furthermore, a focus on the individual practitioner does not mean necessarily imposing one's individual values, but the individual's commitment to process, diversity of opinion, and genuine dialogue and participation.

In examining the interview transcripts and the roles that emerge from this research, respondents seem to vacillate between deontology and teleology. Most practitioners in the study seem to operate under the deontological framework—of duty—and believe that they are behaving ethically because they are 'performing their duties' of serving the CEO and the Executive Team. On the other hand, other respondents seem to operate under a teleological framework—of purpose—where they believe that they are working towards a goal, either for themselves as individuals, or for the organization (Curtin and Boynton, 2001). Although Curtin and Boynton (2001) in their study of ethical public relations practice concluded the absence of a dominant ethical approach, what has not been explored much is the concept of virtue ethics.

The ethical theories on ethical egoism, utilitarianism, Kant's theory and the social contract theory are based on rightness and obligation (Rachels, 2007, p. 174). But the onset of Christianity and its subsequent introduction of the Divine Law superseded the early philosophers' (such as Aristotle, Plato and Socrates) exploration of virtues. But in 1958, Elizabeth Ashcombe questioned having laws with no lawgiver which eventually triggered a discussion on whether it might be appropriate to return to virtue ethics. The ethics of virtue is premised on the question of character and the goodness of the person (Rachels, 2007).

This virtues framework has not been fully explored in the context of public relations practice except by Leeper and Leeper (2001) and Bostdorff (1992). In Aristotle's conception, virtue is a "trait of character manifested in habitual action" to which Rachels (2007, p. 175) adds, "that is good for a person to have". Virtues include characteristic traits such as courage, honesty, generosity, tolerance and loyalty, among others. These virtues are relevant to the public relations/communication practitioner in their practice of

their occupation. When practitioners face ethical dilemmas, questions arise particularly relating to which virtue takes precedence. For example, is the practitioner's loyalty to the organization deemed more important than one's courage of speaking out? If the practitioner observed a practice within his or her organization that in his or her mind is inappropriate or illegal, has spoken to management about the issue but with no success, is it ethical to 'blow the whistle' when blowing the whistle could eventually close the business down and cost work colleagues their jobs?

As recent cases of corporate collapses such as Enron have shown, courage was preferred over loyalty. But following Stoker's (2005) reasoning, the question of loyalty was not really compromised by the whistleblowers in this case, because they were being loyal to 'responsibility' and to their 'profession' rather than the management or the organization.

So when the respondents in this study declared their involvement in developing and implementing communication strategy that supports organizational values, it is useful to ask whether they are in a position to exercise their individual conscience.

#### 7.5.1 A question of conscience and moral development

Another question raised in this study is about how conscience is developed.

According to St Thomas Aquinas, conscience is dictated by reason (Rachels, 1999). In Aquinas' view, conscience is the "application of knowledge to activity" where knowledge is a natural disposition of the mind and application refers to the virtue of prudence (Langston, 2006). Furthermore in his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas emphasized that the will is informed by intellect (Rachels, 1999). If this view were applied to organizations, it can be argued that conscience is informed by a rational process, And that includes the process of setting organizational values, which are meant to guide employee behaviour. So in looking at the process by which organizational values are set and how the communication practitioner is involved in the process, it is possible to determine how much practitioners can exercise the conscience role.

While early childhood conscience development literature suggests that the formation of conscience requires an understanding of rules and regulations, they point to the importance of experiences in close relationships, a developing psychological understanding and emerging self-awareness as morally responsible individuals (Thompson, Meyer & McGinley, 2006).

What this means is that every individual's starting point to developing conscience seems to be based on knowledge of the rules and how they are applied, or what Piaget (cited in Duska & Whelan, 1977) referred to as 'consciousness of rules and practice of rules'. Furthermore, when the value-setting process involves employees from different business units, representing different levels in the hierarchy come together through the workshops or focus groups, they not only share an experience and possibly develop close relationships, but also develop moral awareness.

It seems that while compliance addresses the overt manifestations of ethical behaviour, conscience is the internal discernment of moral and natural laws. In this context, exercising one's conscience can include non-compliance or resistance.

So does this mean that respondents who predominantly comply are unethical? Not necessarily. It is entirely possible for a public relations practitioner to engage in ethical practice in this role although perhaps in limited ways. For example in developing the communication strategy which involves message construction and choice of channels, a practitioner enacting the compliance role can still ensure that the words chosen for encouraging employees to behave according to the standards set by the company are true, and have considered sensitivities and differences of the workforce. At the same time, the practitioner should try to avoid 'spinning' the message by not overly selling the management viewpoint. The morally sensitive practitioner must anticipate concerns by various employees and stick to the facts when explaining the policy in a rational manner and then present how the new policy will affect each employee in the organization.

However, as Duska and Whelan (1977) contend, "Setting rule compliance as a moral goal actually hinders moral development because such an approach reinforces and prolongs the period of moral realism" which is defined as a period where the individual considers duty more important than autonomy (p. 26). It is useful to discuss the earlier conceptions of moral development by Piaget and Kohlberg (Duska & Whelan, 1977) in thinking about how public relations roles incorporate ethics.

In both conceptions of moral development, Piaget and Kohlberg suggested that before the individual gets to the stage of exercising conscience or autonomy (in Kohlberg's stages, this refers to the post-conventional level, stages 5 and 6), one needs to be aware of the rules and norms. As the individual matures cognitively, engages in more social interaction, and experiences empathy and cognitive conflict, the individual develops moral maturity (Duska & Whelan, 1977, p. 107).

The finding that most respondents report a compliance role may be explained by what Goodpaster (2004) refers to as the predominance of teleopathy, or the pursuit of purpose or goals in organizations. He argues that the teleopathic approach provides a rational and detached manner where the “call of decision criteria—winning the game, achieving objectives, following the rules, laid down by a goal-oriented framework” replaces the “call of conscience” (Goodpaster, 2004, p. 5). This explanation makes sense as even the teaching of public relations as a strategic management function is structured around the definition of goals and measurable objectives (Nager & Truitt, 1991; Austin & Pinkleton, 2006; Hendrix, 1998). Similarly, strategic planning which integrates the identification of vision, mission and purpose, falls within the context of a teleopathic approach. Because teleopathic decision-making tends to create myopia, Goodpaster (2004) proposed to address teleopathy by moving organizational thought from fixation to perspective, and from detachment to engagement. These propositions resonate with this study particularly in terms of reframing public relations roles using multiple perspectives and in rethinking practitioners’ involvement in the value-setting process, from dissemination to construction.

In discussing the issues of ethics, conscience and moral development, it is useful to ask whether the current conception of the public relations practitioner’s role as manager or technician is a barrier to ethical behaviour.

## **7.6 A question of leadership**

Following the distinction between managers and leaders made in Chapter 4, the results of the study revealed that all respondents reflect a more managerial role. The nature of most of the respondents’ approach to their work indicates efforts toward maintaining stability. This could be explained by mainstream public relations scholarship’s focus on public relations as a management function (Botan & Hazleton, 2006; Haas, 2001). Several studies, including recent ones (DeSanto & Moss, 2004; Moss & Green, 2001) focus on the managerial function, and this current research is no exception. As a few of the respondents implied, they expressed preferences to be a member of the dominant coalition and advocated getting a seat at the boardroom table (Dozier, et al., 1995). But it didn’t seem clear to them what role they will enact when they get there. Will they provide a leadership function or still a management function? Will they ensure stability and control as managers are expected to do, or will they explore new territory and lead by inquiry?

However many of the respondents also reported combining their managerial roles with leadership activities, at least based on definitions by Heifetz (1994) and Berson & Avolio (2004). For example, a few of them narrated how they were able to influence the business unit leaders and their CEOs to adopt their thinking or take their advice. If the direction of the influence is toward their CEO or their

immediate superior, the respondents are ‘leading up’ (Useem, 2001, cited in Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Although CEOs are traditionally known to embody leadership in organizations, this current study’s findings support previous literature (Heifetz, 1994; Berson & Avolio, 2004) which suggest that the scope of leadership is being extended to include people who can influence others in the organization. Of the 17 respondents who reported enacting leadership activities, 14 were involved in value setting. The next question then asks whether their organizational culture is a factor.

Organizational culture is said to provide the context for determining what the public relations role will be (Dozier, et al., 1995; Bowen, 2002). Examining the organizational cultures of the 17 reporting leadership activities, 11 respondents worked in authoritative cultures and only six worked in participative cultures. Does this mean that authoritative cultures tend to groom more public relations practitioners as manager-leaders? It seems paradoxical to think of strong, authoritative cultures sharing the leadership roles with more individuals. Usually, the CEO as a key member of the strategic leadership team defines the organizational culture (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004). Could this paradox be explained by the nature of the current business environment where CEOs have an average life span of about three years (*The CEO in Transition*, 2003; Conyon, 1994) and therefore change regularly?

If CEOs change regularly, does this mean that the organizational values change often too? While many of the respondents mentioned that a change in the CEO triggered changes in their organization, the changes do not always include value changes. In some instances, the organizations underwent a value change process even if they did not have a new CEO. These responses indicated that organizational values do not necessarily emerge from individual values (of the CEO or a few influential leaders) but also from group values in pursuit of the organizational purpose. As such, many large-sized organizations such as those represented by this study’s respondents, have developed Senior Leadership Groups to replace or supplement what used to be called Executive Committees, or Top Management Teams.

So what is the difference between the new and the old terminology? Could it be pure semantics? It is possible. But as words are powerful symbols, the move towards using the word “leadership” compared with “management” may either reflect self-aggrandizement or a significant paradigm shift.

If leaders are expected to think differently, radically at times, toward a certain goal, only very few of the respondents met this expectation. Most of the respondents still reflected the traditional mindset that



managers exist to implement someone else's vision. As previously mentioned, leaders tend to drive change and managers are expected to ensure stability to enable the implementation of the change (Cheney et al., 2004; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004; Kotter, 1996). Many of the respondents enacted Mintzberg's (1980) informational roles where the manager disseminates decisions made by someone else.

So are public relations/communication practitioners able to become leaders within the organization? What else would the practitioners do once they reach and belong to the dominant coalition?

Respondents in the study, regardless of their membership of the executive group or direct CEO report, said that their opinions on communication matters were often sought. The range of matters under the umbrella term of "communication" however is quite diverse. Some reported that they are responsible for "promoting and protecting the company's reputation". Some were expected to anticipate issues and inform the management about them, and offer solutions. From the responses, very few indicated that they would have offered alternative viewpoints. While Kim, Patricia, Sam and Paul suggested that they have engaged in robust discussions with their managers/supervisors, they did not specify if those discussions were with the CEO. Of course, power politics and other group dynamics exist and are at play within these executive groups. And senior communicators who may have taken the long road to get there are unlikely to jeopardise that "membership" by being radical, different, or outrageous.

Many of the respondents referred to their "good relationship" with the CEO for providing them the confidence to offer alternate viewpoints. A couple of respondents even stated that their CEOs expected that from them as communication practitioners and no one else, because they can "tell it like it is"—a reference to their journalistic affiliations as the quote is from US television news personality, Walter Cronkite.

It is opportunities like these when communication practitioners should re-think and reflect on their roles within the organization. Will they provide and act as the agent of conscience? Will they provide honest, critical and alternative viewpoints to the management? Will they define whose interests are being served, primarily, secondarily? What are the costs to taking this role? What are the benefits? Who are the stakeholders who will be most affected? How can the organization **help** them?

While it seems reasonable to suggest that the public relations/communication function is realistically limited because it is considered a "staff function", once the practitioners become "line managers", the

opportunities to initiate and drive change open up. This expansion of opportunity to be involved in change was revealed by at least one respondent in this current study, who said that her “line management” role rather than her corporate/public affairs role allowed her to get involved in the value-setting process.

This line management role may also provide the practitioners with an opportunity to develop their roles in the direction of manager/teacher. Carroll and Gillen (2002) found that the manner in which the targeted learners receive the learning, the effective performance of the role, and acceptance of the teacher/manager role, are critical to the effective enactment of the manager/teacher role. If communication practitioners perceive that teaching others is rewarding, and they have the ability to simplify complexity, that they are perceived to be effective communicators, possess knowledge credibility, and have the desire to improve others, then they are likely to enact a teacher/manager role. This notion of leaders as teachers, as well as designers and stewards, reflects the “new view of leadership in learning organizations” (Senge, 1999, p. 340).

As such, it is highly possible for communication practitioners in management positions such as this study’s respondents, to teach their work colleagues and management the importance and value of ethical and socially responsible behaviour.

As in previous research (Dozier, et al., 1995; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002), many of the respondents also suggested that not only is access to the CEO important, but that the CEO’s understanding and appreciation of the public relations/communication function is well established and fairly progressive. In some instances, the CEO’s support of the public relations/communication function establishes the perceived power that the department enjoys. However, this support must be received with a lot of caution because as previously mentioned, CEOs usually have short employment terms and if the practitioners are perceived to be closely affiliated with that particular CEO, the practitioner’s tenure may be compromised when that CEO leaves the company.

Whether the communication practitioner is a strategic leader or a direct leader (Grojean et al., 2004), the important thing in engaging employees is to earn their trust by demonstrating that leaders behave in the manner they expect their employees to behave. In some way, communication practitioners as direct leaders who “interpret and disseminate top management’s policies to their subordinates” (Grojean et al., 2004) play a critical role in the creation of perceptions about the organization’s policies.

When framed against the ten managerial roles proffered by Mintzberg (1980), the interview responses revealed that the communication practitioners in this study do enact multiple roles. As most of the respondents occupied senior management status, they are usually leading a team and as the most senior in the group, they were usually the person who represents that team in meetings and would bring information into and out of the meetings with their counterparts from the other business units/teams.

The study also revealed that the respondents performed internal boundary spanning roles. As other scholars have mentioned (Ferguson, 1987; Creedon, 1991), representational and liaison roles seem to be the predominant role enacted by practitioners. While the respondents also reported responsibility for external relations, many of the respondents indicated liaising with the organization's business units, either through special projects or just as part of their daily routine. A few of the respondents also indicated undertaking representational roles either to represent employees as part of their employee communication role, or to represent the Communication Department in cross-functional groups. Clearly however was the respondents' representation of the management 'side' more than the employees' 'side', a point that contradicts Holtzhausen and Voto's (2002) findings.

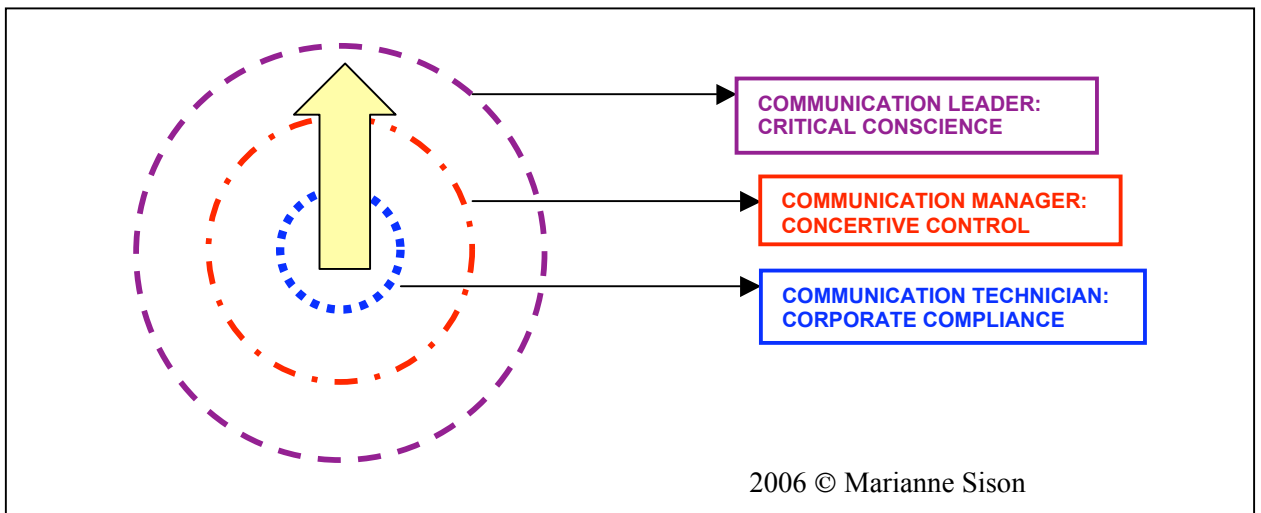
This representational role is similar to the critical perspective's notion of the leadership role. The critical perspective would suggest that the public relations/communication practitioner should also explore the range of voices and diversity of opinion within the organization in an open and genuine dialogic process. Resistance in organizations can come from distrust of symbolic gestures of 'openness' and transparency by leaders and managers who merely pay lip service to these values (Knowles & Linn, 2004). The critical perspective also would call for the public relations/communication practitioner to enact his or her leadership role by leading the dialogue and asking the hard questions, the questions that no one might have dared ask within the rather closed circle of the dominant coalition. While a few respondents indicated that they encouraged debates and have been part of the same with their colleagues and superiors, the majority of the respondents did not. Thus it is more appropriate to use leadership definitions that include not only the ability to influence but also the ability to encourage inquiry and critical thinking.

Leadership requires taking risks and sometimes at the expense of the organization's profits when required. This dilemma occurs when leaders of lesser resolve and moral grounding fail especially when faced with their fiduciary role of ensuring profitability for their corporation.

The critical and ethical leader needs to be aware of the views from the whole spectrum of stakeholders in order to make a meaningful decision when required (Goodpaster, 2004).

In their enactment of multiple roles, respondents in executive leadership roles narrated how they still are expected to undertake technical activities such as ‘word smithing’. The same is true for respondents in managerial roles. What this means is that practitioners are already enacting multiple roles, including leadership roles, but this role has not been fully explored in public relations role literature. Perhaps it is appropriate, based on this study’s findings, to extend Broom and Dozier’s manager-technician typology to include a leadership component. However, the extended typology will not be presented as a linear model because as this research and previous research have shown, some practitioners do elements of all the roles. As such, the typology is presented as concentric circles.

Figure 7.2 Extending the manager-technician role typology



The illustration is made based on the core activities communication practitioners undertake which may also represent a development of their role. The diagram does not intend to represent the number of practitioners enacting the different roles, meaning that there are more communication leaders than technicians because it is more likely that the reverse condition is true.

The concentric circles are drawn to represent the overlapping and multiplicity of roles enacted by the communication practitioner. Starting from the core of technical competence for which most communication practitioners are hired, the model represents a broadening of the individual practitioner’s skill base and eventual power and influence base.

Furthermore, this study contends that the manager-technician typology resulting from a predominantly managerial/functionalist perspective constrains the enactment of the organizational conscience role by public relations/communication practitioners. The results of this research found that the manager-technician typology needs to be extended to include a leader role component. To do so requires a paradigm shift to incorporate both rhetorical/interpretive and critical/dialectical perspectives in the study of public relations roles. For one, to extend the role typology to incorporate a leader/manager/technician framework will require a clear distinction between the leadership and managerial roles.

As previously emphasised by other scholars (Cheney et al., 2004; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004), this distinction between leadership and management is imperative especially within the context of 'doing the right thing'. Leadership is often affiliated with morality but not management, because leadership implies a willingness to drive change through courage and a commitment to strong ethical values and principles. Moral leadership is also about moral agency. This means that one exercises leadership by exercising agency where the individual can inculcate change for the better regardless of one's position.

#### 7.6.1 Rethinking power and influence

This research also revealed how public relations and communication practitioners are so misunderstood, even by researchers like myself. We have been socialised to believe leadership requires a position of power to be able to lead, to influence others, to enact change or even make a difference. While this thinking may still be true, this research revealed that positional power is not a sufficient condition for leadership, influence and social change. Instead, individual practitioners can initiate change through their involvement in value setting if they really want to—if they take on an agency role. Admittedly, the respondents have to contend with structural and cultural obstacles to enact the value changes, but when they use some of their personal attributes--conscientiousness, diplomacy, reliability, truthfulness and integrity--they find that those attributes give them a certain level of influence and power.

When communication practitioners are able to engage their colleagues to discuss, debate, deconstruct certain issues while employing their rational and creative thinking in the process of setting organizational values, regardless of finding a solution to the issue/s, they have already undertaken a process where they engaged and shared a common experience. In some instances, there will be emotions of anger, frustration, awe, inspiration or nonchalance. But each individual in that process has been able to think through, process the issue/s, and express one's feelings and ideas. These shared experiences provide individuals with what postmodernists refer to as biopower (Holtzhausen & Voto,

2002). Biopower in this instance gives practitioners the courage to choose sides and engage in organizational activism.

The issue of power and job performance was stressed when Patricia so articulately expressed a very refreshing insight, “Sometimes you can do your job better if you give up some of your power.” This relationship of performance and effectiveness with less power is not a customary view. The common view is that individuals, especially managers, become more effective because they have the power to acquire resources, order people to work towards a task within a time frame and provide them with rewards and sanctions for achieving targets.

When asked to explain what she meant by her response, Patricia said that giving up some of the power can make communication practitioners do a more effective job because they can depend on other people to contribute. In this instance she referred to the concept of ownership, which many of the other respondents also mentioned. Admittedly, only a few respondents in this study believed that the people in the organization should own the values, the process and that the employees should be involved actively “because they’re probably the people who stay for 20 years.”

Given that CEOs have been recently found to have a “life-span” of about three years, the above comment makes perfect sense even if most of the respondents believed that values and the process are and should be owned by the CEO. The problem with this latter view is that the CEO position is a very tentative proposition and organizational values and organizational culture, although evolving over time, should not be treated like new products that can be introduced, re-introduced depending on the CEO’s background, mood or tenure.

Commodifying values usually engenders feelings of cynicism and scepticism among employees. Therefore the respondents’ unwitting or strategic decisions to give their colleagues more opportunities for involvement, and subsequently more responsibility, may in fact engender more understanding about organizational processes. Presumably, a deeper involvement within organizational processes can address and minimise whatever scepticism employees may have in the workplace.

Initially Patricia’s view about ‘giving up power’ seemed like she was ‘surrendering power’ and in some way, giving up her chance to make a difference to make changes to her company. However, when pressed further about her response, Patricia clarified that she wanted to be, and has been, involved in making changes in her company. But she qualified her response that communication practitioners can

actually make changes and influence the business depending on the mindsets of the people within the organization. In her case she had the support of three business unit heads who ask for and take her advice, a situation however that doesn't apply in other parts of the organization.

The *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2004, p. 318) defines devolution as “the delegation of power, especially from a central government to local or regional administration”. On the other hand, surrender is defined as the “hand over; relinquish possession of especially on compulsion or demand; give into another's power or control” (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* 2004, p. 1438).

Distinguishing these two terms emphasizes the power-control dimension in public relations roles. The term ‘devolution’ implies that all parties have agreed that power will be distributed from the main ‘office’ to the ‘other offices’, and as such they were part of a negotiation or a dialogue on how to reorganise the power structures. And during this dialogue the parties could have been involved in an argument, a debate, and even a confrontation. On the other hand, the term ‘surrender’ suggests that one either gave up without a fight or submitted to a stronger force of law or position.

Furthermore, devolving power aims to involve other members of the organization, redistribute the power among more people, which gives more people the opportunity to get involved and contribute to the organizational processes. On the other hand, one who surrenders power seems to do so to appease the people around or above the individual, and sees this action as a short-term solution that prioritizes his or her survival and self-interest.

As such, this thesis posits that the practitioners should set themselves as leaders in their own right, who become well known within the organization as something akin to an independent think tank. Another new management buzzword, “thought leaders”, may need to be considered more seriously as the term seems appropriate to describe public relations/communication practitioners.

#### 7.6.2 Courageous leadership and followership

We sat down last week and had a talk with the Managing Director...no we had quite a kind of confrontation, conversation four weeks ago, and then I know he went and gave his team a kick...he told them like “if people in Corporate Affairs are calling you, you need to call them back,” and for a week, it was going well. And now we're back to square one again. (Patricia)

As the quote suggests, communication practitioners engage in courageous acts of ‘confronting’ their superiors. Changes to organizational processes are areas where communication practitioners can get

involved and influence in a positive way. But doing so requires a certain amount of courage from the individuals. In analysing the responses from the interviewees in this research, it seems that not only are credentials, expertise and seniority important in gaining influence in the organization but also one's personality. These personal attributes include diplomacy skills, a positive attitude, and courage. Courage is required not only to identify areas which need to be addressed or corrected but also to articulate these issues and open up the discussion on those possible issues. Oftentimes, the respondents are put in positions which test their integrity and loyalties and many of the respondents mentioned having to put up a 'good fight' to convince their superiors why their suggestions should be heeded.

Influencing one's superiors to gain support, moving beyond one's assigned responsibilities and taking charge when required are indicative of what has been referred to as 'leading up' (Useem, 2001, cited in Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 337).

Defined as the "ability to disregard fear" (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2004, p. 318), courage falls within the rubric of character and virtues which Aristotle mentions in his treatise entitled, *Nichomachean Ethics* (Rachels, 2007). Greek philosophers say that courage, which is a virtue along with knowledge, is essential to achieving the state of *eudaimonia*—which literally means the 'good guardian spirit'. And that to achieve that state, one must continually practise to be virtuous. Aristotle's position on defining concepts based on the mean states that courage is the mean between cowardice and foolhardiness (Rachels, 2007).

What this suggests is that knowledge of what is right and what is wrong is not sufficient for a practitioner to exercise a leadership role. One must also have the courage to act on what is considered wrong. In the same manner, organizations need to display courage in allowing non-traditional and innovative ways to receive feedback from its employees. As Marge's and Mary Ann's organizations learned the hard way, the dependence on regular management channels to cascade information upward did not work because middle managers tended to select, filter and pass only the good news because of the view that bad news reflects on their performance as managers.

Similarly courage is viewed as the "most important virtue for followers" (Kidder, 1994, cited in Hackman & Johnson, 2004). In particular courage is required when assuming responsibility, serving, challenging, participating in transformation and in leaving the organization. Following this view, practitioners whether they are in leadership positions or not, require a certain amount of courage to exercise an ethical and socially responsible role for 21<sup>st</sup> century practice.



To summarize, an individual practitioner's perspective and approaches to human agency, ethics and leadership determine the types of role enacted in the organizational value-setting process. While the combination of these factors assisted in analysing the types of roles communication practitioners enacted, the nature of the individual practitioner's involvement in the value-setting process was a key factor in defining the roles. From this analysis, three roles emerged namely, the agent of corporate compliance, the agent of concertive control, and the agent of critical conscience. It must be noted that the respondents cannot be clearly identified as distinctly enacting one role and not the other. Instead they exhibited predominant characteristics of one agency role and may exhibit characteristics of other roles but in a more subdued manner.

## **7.7 The three agency roles: a new framework**

The three agency roles emerging from analysing the results are described here. It must be noted that the roles illustrate general characteristics revealed during the course of the interviews with the respondents, rather than a response to a specific question. Some overlaps may occur and some practitioners have exhibited characteristics of more than one agency role. Thus while care is given not to classify respondents' with particular agency roles, their responses are provided to illustrate the characteristics of the predominant role.

### 7.7.1 Agent of corporate compliance

Two groups of respondents may be classified as agents of corporate compliance. One group represents respondents who reported involvement in the organizational value-setting process but their involvement occurs during the implementation stage of the process. The second group of respondents in this category represents those who are not involved in the organizational value-setting process regardless whether their reason was by choice or by circumstance.

For the first group, the respondents whose involvement in value setting occurs at the latter stage of the process, their main responsibilities include implementing and developing programs that support organizational values defined by the senior management. This group is not involved in the identification of values, nor did they participate in the workshops. Furthermore, in addition to developing communication strategy, which is seen as a managerial task, they are involved in the production of materials to disseminate the organizational values across the organization.

The nature of the interactions of the respondents in this group are mostly persuasive as they develop communication strategy, programs and materials that aim to elicit behavioural compliance among the organization's employees.

The second group of corporate compliance agents are the respondents who have no involvement at all in the value-setting process, either because values have not changed since they started their employment, or because the values were developed in the overseas head office. This group believes it has no choice but to follow and comply with the value programs and behaviours others have developed. Similarly they are involved in implementation of programs and production of communication messages and materials, but have no input into the process.

Do they have an opportunity to influence the organization through their word-smithing skills? To some extent they do but their opportunity is limited to tweaking the words of the values statements.

Respondents who exhibit characteristics of the agent of corporate compliance reflect a predominantly managerial/functionalist perspective. Their idea of the communication practitioner is to support the executive team and be the implementer of the decisions made by the CEO and the Leadership Team. The practitioners see themselves in a fairly limited role where their roles are clearly defined by parameters and accountabilities and do not see themselves as wanting to extend their influence any more.

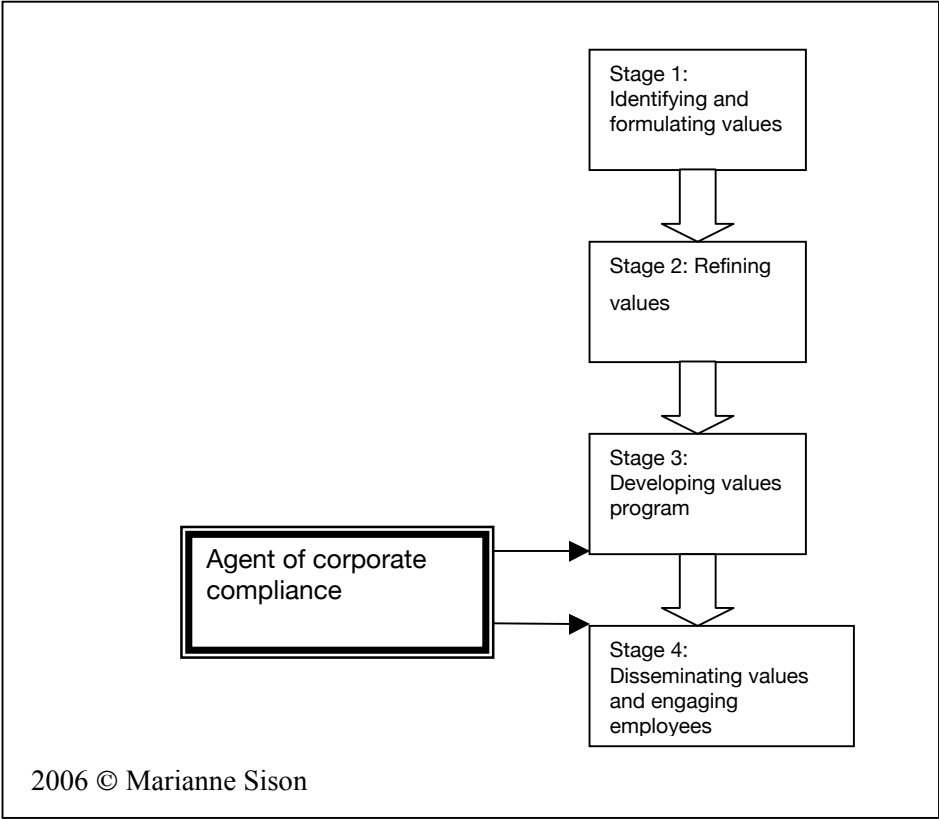
In Mandy's organization for example, the CEO led and facilitated the discussion and made very clear that the "values are not owned by HR" but by the CEO leadership team. In Tom's organization, the former CEO set the values because he "loved strategy, vision/mission stuff". The top down approach to value setting where the dominant coalition presents the organizational values to the employees demonstrates the importance of top management ownership of the value-setting process.

In the top-down approach, CEO and the leadership team develops the values and engages the communication practitioner's role to develop the program, communication strategy and materials necessary to ensure employees know and adhere to the values. As such, the communication practitioner's role is akin to the technician role in the manager-technician typology. Furthermore, the mindset that the communication practitioner's role is meant to serve the CEO and the leadership team reflects a managerial/functionalist perspective. Laura who works in a large financial services organization further demonstrates this mindset.

For example, when asked who should have the most influence in setting organizational values, Laura replied, “(The) CEO, because the culture of the organization reflects his vision, his values and it enables us to rally behind him and everyone buys in to those values, he sets the tone and style.”

Following Etzioni’s (1980) definition of compliance, the agency of corporate compliance can refer to either how “an actor behaves in accordance with a directive supported by another actor’s power” or to the “orientation of the subordinated actor to the power applied” (p. 87). This means that the individual practitioner could be complying as a consequence of a power relationship, or as a choice borne out of his or her own perspective.

Figure 7.3 Agent of corporate compliance involvement in value setting



It may appear that the agent of corporate compliance follows deontological reasoning in exercising his or her role. However as Davis (1993) warned, “deontological views require agents to refrain from doing the sorts of things that are wrong even when they see that their refusal to do such things will clearly result in greater harm (or less good)” (p. 206). What is critical for practitioners enacting the agent of

corporate compliance role is how they define their duty. Are they doing their duty as an employee of the organization, or as an industry professional, or as a member of society?

To summarize, the agent of corporate compliance tends to: follow the corporate rules with very little questioning; implement others' decisions; have no opportunity to intervene or engage in the value-setting process; views public relations as a management function whose primary duty is to support the CEO and Executive Team; work in an authoritarian culture where organizational values are driven by the top management team; and possess limited levels of influence in the organization.

#### 7.7.2 Agent of concertive control

While some persuasion theorists may see compliance and control as the same construct, this study differentiates the two based on three factors. The first factor is the stage at which the respondents are involved in the organizational value-setting process. The second is the nature of the involvement of the practitioners and other employees. Finally the third factor refers to the presence of any overt sanctions offered or perceived by the practitioners for their 'obedience'.

Most respondents who are involved in organizational value setting at either the focus group stage or the engagement stage may be enacting concertive control roles. The collaborative nature of the role demonstrates a participative style however the objective is to define specific 'ideal' behaviours for the employees to enact. Communication practitioners involved in this process tend to, probably unwittingly, assist the organization develop a homogeneous culture. Usually the top management sets the parameters for which the process is undertaken and the concertive control agent ensures the guidelines are followed. Furthermore, the nature of the communication practitioner's role is mostly consultative and collaborative. The importance placed on the consultative process needs to be examined in terms of the extent to which the process is genuinely soliciting employee input or only finding justification for top management's decisions.

Respondents who exhibited characteristics of the agent of concertive control worked in project teams and exercised some autonomy in developing the rules for the process and the process participants. Because they viewed themselves as representing management, communication practitioners who enact the agent of concertive control role tend to ensure stability and minimise dissensus.

The respondents who fall within this category seem to reflect a predominantly rhetorical/interpretive perspective where they use their discursive skills and meaning making skills to engage their colleagues

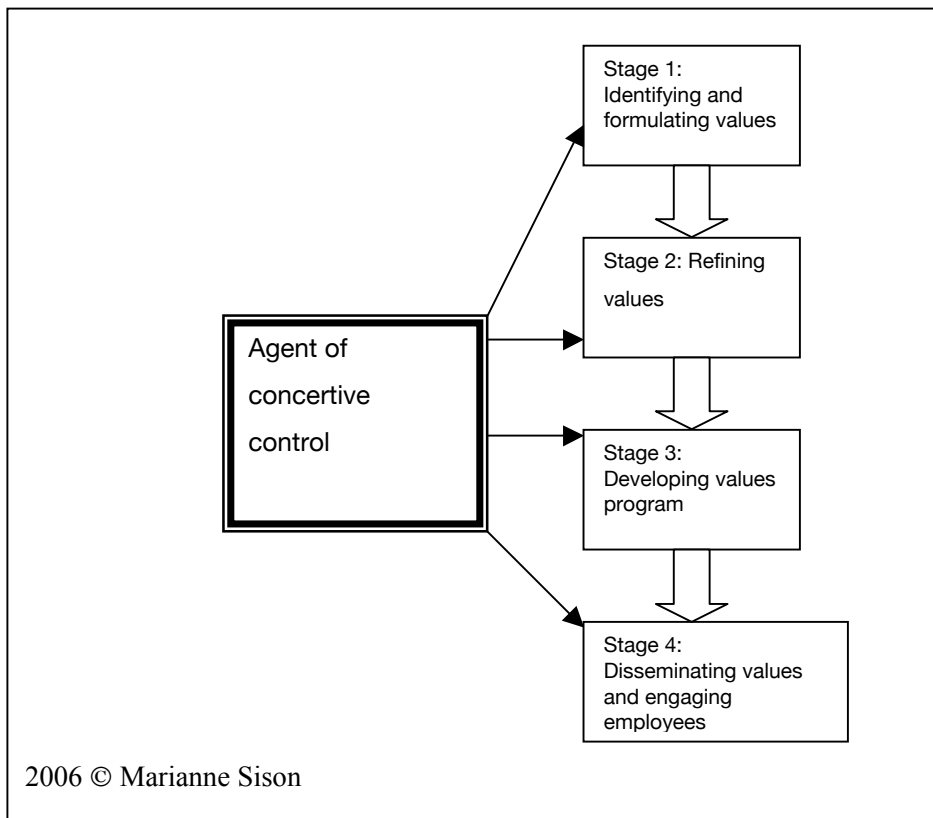
in collaborative work. By being part of a project team or being in a participative process, they believe that they are guiding their work colleagues toward the required or preferred behaviours.

For example, Kara mentioned how her company undertakes unobtrusive control measures in introducing new values to its employees.

We're not doing a launch...it's infiltrating it...integrating it throughout the systems within the organization so that when we start to overlay explicit communication about the values, and they know they're measured on it as well rather than here's another story but nobody checks if I'm doing it right.

In undertaking participatory decision making, employees go through a process of negotiated consensus of which the 'shared values' are the outcome. These values are then used to identify 'proper' behaviour that is acceptable and allow employees to function according to the expectations of the organization (Barker, 1999, p. 39). These participative activities require the communication practitioners to use their persuasive and sense-making skills on their groups while working within the set parameters. As such, the agent of concertive control reflects a rhetorical/interpretive perspective.

Figure 7.4 Agent of concertive control involvement in value setting



In this role the public relations/communication practitioner is involved in the shifting of the locus of control from management to the employees themselves who “collaborate together to develop the means of their own control” (Barker, 1999, pp. 38-39).

According to the theory of concertive control, employees are willing to submit to a locus of authority which is not based on the bureaucracy’s rules, but on the rules created through employee consensus. Barker (1999) further asserts that because of the “highly persuasive discourse of collective values, norms, and rules, it becomes a very powerful force within the organization” (p. 40). Within this context, many of the respondents described their interactions with their work colleagues as consultative and persuasive. The use of participatory processes in developing organizational values assumes that employees will be more likely to behave accordingly if they owned and were involved in the process.

Respondents often mentioned the notions of ownership and buy-in as essential in the process. As Kara mentioned previously, employees should have the most influence in the value-setting process because as she said “no amount of ... leadership enforcement will make it happen.”

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) explained why individuals or employees allow their organizations to make decisions on their behalf. Firstly, when someone joins an organization they have to ‘sacrifice’ a certain degree of autonomy. Secondly, when they accept wages or salaries, they defer to the organizational management’s decision as part of the exchange. The third factor is the ‘aura of authority’ or ‘perceived legitimate power’ which means that the employees interpret the directive and in some way ‘allow’ themselves to be controlled because they feel they have to (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985, pp. 186-187).

The respondents explained their ability and sometimes, inability to exercise control in the internal processes of the organization, particularly in organizational culture change. Even when public relations roles are discussed using the manager/technician typology within the external relations context, managing and controlling activities are expected of the practitioners. For example, when public relations practitioners are called on during a crisis, their main task is to “control” the bad press, or exercise “damage control”. Many crisis management plans emphasise this aspect.

One of the possible explanations for the concertive control agency among many of this study’s respondents is the focus of many organizations on collaboration and consensus to replace command and control. When the words ‘collaboration’ or ‘consultative’ were used by the respondents, it seemed that

they were not completely aware of the possibilities of self-regulation and discipline that could have been occurring in those team-based activities. There was no mention about their concerns about the collaborative activity except to suggest that was the 'right' thing to do for the process to work and engage the employees.

To summarise, the agent of concertive control tends to: engage in consultative and collaborative activities; have considerable power and influence; be involved in the actual phases of the organizational value-setting process; reflect a rhetorical and persuasive role through meaning making on behalf of the management more than the employees; and be a manager interested in stability.

### 7.7.3 Agent of critical conscience

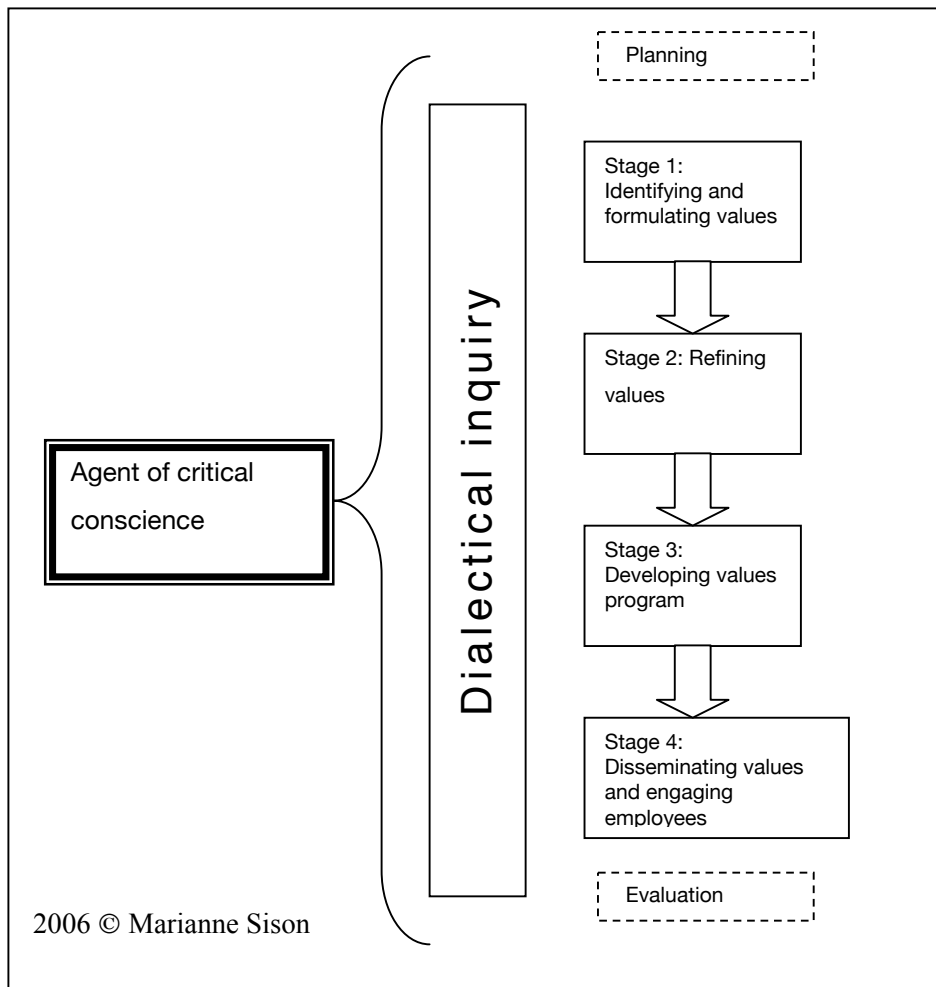
Although the respondents in this study reported predominantly corporate compliance and concertive control roles, a few respondents demonstrated some potential to be agents of critical conscience by being involved at the start and throughout the several stages of the organizational value-setting process. Furthermore, a few respondents also demonstrated traces of the critical conscience role by engaging in robust debates, discussions and critique of management decisions. The aim of the critical conscience agent is to ensure that through the dialectical process, organizational members are able to comprehensively process all aspects of the issues and not be drawn merely by expediency or commercial interests or the demands of the top management. Furthermore the critical conscience agent should encourage the process to emerge from the participants and be a genuine bottom-up approach, rather than react from a top-down directive.

Unlike the agent of concertive control, the participatory nature of the agent of critical conscience is geared towards engaging the process based on the individual values of the employees. Its participatory nature also allows for equal voice and democratic processes at all stages of the process.

The communication practitioner can enact this role if he or she is part of the planning or project team that is managing the value change process. The earlier dialectical inquiry is integrated in the process, the more effective the impact of the agent of critical conscience. As Schein (1992) implied in his discussion of leadership and life cycle stages, the earlier the change agent is involved in the process, the better because as the process progresses, the impact for successful change lessens. Furthermore, integrating the dialectical inquiry process through the monitoring and evaluation phase is helpful and should be within the realm of this role.

The critical conscience role is similar to how other public relations scholars conceptualised the conscience role (Ryan & Martinson, 1983; Pearson, 1989b; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Berger, 2005) with its focus on the dialogic process. However the way they previously conceptualised the role is that the practitioner sets up the scene or establishes the channels by which two-way communication can occur. They state the practitioner should encourage dialogue but never describe how. This current study's conception identifies the importance of the dialectical inquiry as the process by which genuine dialogue is engendered.

Figure 7.5 Agent of critical conscience involvement in organizational value setting



Respondents exhibiting characteristics of the agent of critical conscience tend to: report commitment to dialectical processes by their involvement in the definition of the process; exercise considerable influence with the top management team and across the organization; welcome and promote debate,



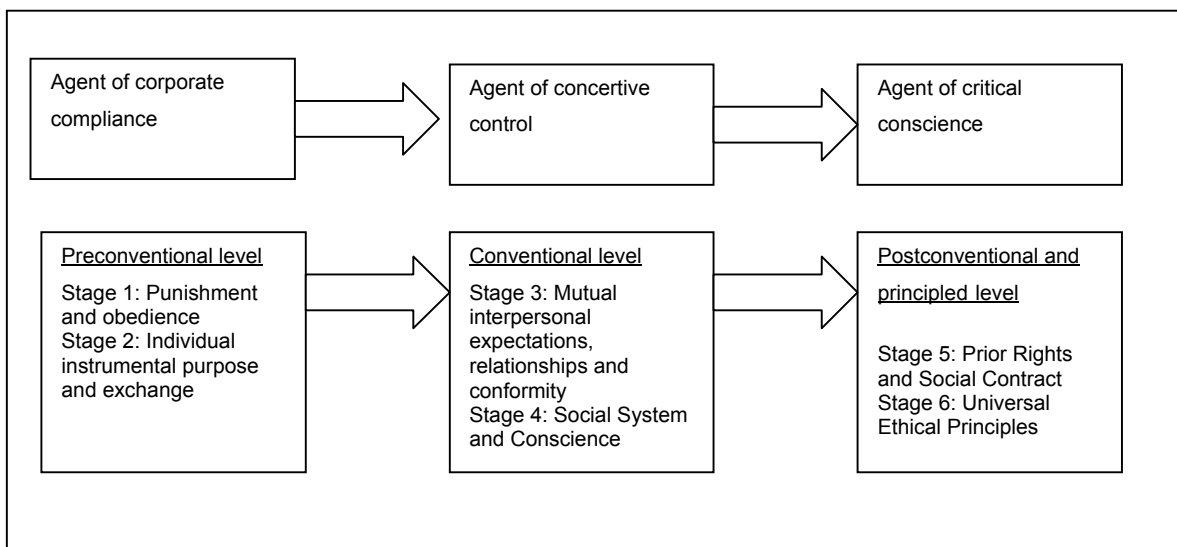
critique and new ideas; have a good “partner” relationship with the CEO whose critical views are encouraged; work in an environment where the CEO is open-minded, progressive and values communication as integral to the business; and possesses moral courage and is willing to exercise it.

7.7.4 A continuum of agency role development?

Relating this back to the three agency roles emerging from this research, it is quite plausible to view the three roles along a continuum, where the agent of corporate compliance reflects Kohlberg’s (1981) pre-conventional level; the agent of concertive control reflects the conventional level; and the agent of critical conscience reflects the post-conventional and principled level. If the three roles were viewed within the context of Kohlberg’s (1981) moral development, then it is reasonable to suggest that the three agency roles exercise levels of ethical and moral maturity. Figure 7.6 illustrates this conception.

According to Kohlberg (1981), an individual’s social conscience develops at a stage after the individual has learned the rules and norms; and after this is the stage called the principled level. Applying this notion of moral development to organizations, it implies that organizational members, such as communication practitioners, need to go through a process of knowing and understanding the rules and norms before they can enact organizational conscience roles. As such the identification of the values and their corresponding behaviours is an important first step in the process. Following Kohlberg’s (1981) framework, is it possible that the roles practitioners enact could follow a similar continuum?

*Figure 7.6 Relating agency role development with Kohlberg’s moral development*



The research results demonstrate that public relations/communication practitioners currently do not primarily enact organizational conscience roles. Rather they primarily enact compliance and control roles, which is reflective of their managerial/functionalist perspective. Even the respondents' own conceptions of their communication practitioner roles are defined and constrained by this perspective. The important finding here however is that there is potential to change. Most of the respondents expressed their interest in wanting to be involved in the value-setting process, if they are not already. Many of them felt that involvement is important for them to 'own' and 'feel an attachment' to the organization in which they work. A few respondents indicated they enact some elements of the organizational conscience roles, albeit in different ways and stages of the process. However it could not be determined whether these few respondents enacted the organizational conscience role as part of their professional or personal identity.

What may be seen as an intervening factor is that of education, rather than age, as revealed in Rest and Narvaez's (1994) study. Although most of the respondents reported that life experience, one's individual upbringing and background, more than education or training, are important to one's involvement in value setting, they must be assuming that individuals all come from similar backgrounds. While this current study did not specifically ask the respondents whether they have had ethical training, it seems reasonable to infer that since 18 of the 30 respondents had postgraduate qualifications, they have had some exposure to moral education programs, which fosters the development of moral judgement, similar to those used by Rest and Narvaez (1994). A

In the same way Argyris and Schön (1978) expressed concerns regarding espoused values and values in use, one's moral judgement cannot determine one's moral behaviour. Rest and Narvaez (1994) proposed that ethical and moral behaviour consist of four components namely, moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral character. Moral sensitivity refers to the "awareness of how our actions affect other people" (p. 23) and being aware of other possible options when interpreting the situation. Moral judgement is deciding which action is morally right or wrong and choosing which action to take of the options presented. Moral motivation refers to the "importance given to moral values in competition with other values" (Rest & Narvaez, 1994, p. 24) as in the case of a practitioner willing to sacrifice his or her job security to uphold his or her moral principles. The fourth component, moral character refers to having courage, persisting, overcoming distractions and implementing skills. Applying these concepts to this current study, public relations practitioners enact ethical and moral behaviour if they possess awareness, sensitivity, motivation and courage, and not merely if they comply to rules and regulations.

The three types of roles revealed in this research are not mutually exclusive nor are they meant to supersede any other typology of roles previously identified. The roles identified here provide another way of describing the roles practitioners enact within the organization. These roles were distinguished by the motives and their behaviours, their views of their existing and potential role within the organization, others' expectations of their role, their views of their power and influence; relational proximity to dominant coalition and other factors.

Quite clearly however, conceptions about roles are not enough. To address the aforementioned questions, the next section proposes a normative role for the public relations practitioner which requires a rethinking of public relations roles.

## **7.8 Rethinking public relations roles: toward a normative role of critical conscience**

What this research underscores is the need to rethink public relations and communicator roles especially within the context of a transparent, fast-changing, highly technological and global environment.

The existing literature combined with the research results point to the types of agency current Australian public relations and communication practitioners enact as well as the type of agency they could potentially enact in the future.

This paper argues that one way to think about future public relations roles is by exploring the agency of critical conscience. However rethinking public relations roles toward an agency of critical conscience requires certain conditions. They include: commitment to process; champion of critical and dialectical inquiry; broad and deep knowledge and understanding of organizational processes and philosophy; and a willingness to lead. These conditions and the reasons why a critical conscience role is necessary for organizations are hereby explained.

### 7.8.1 Commitment to and involvement in process

To be an agent of critical conscience, the practitioner ideally must be involved in all the stages of the organizational value-setting process. If the practitioner is only involved in the latter stages of the process and as such, offers very little opportunity to engage the process, he or she is likely to be an agent of corporate compliance or concertive control.

While the value-setting process may only be one organizational process in which the critical conscience role may be involved, it does not preclude its involvement in other processes. In fact the more embedded the role is in most if not all organizational policy making processes, then it suggests that the organization is acting in an ethically and socially responsible manner.

While admittedly value setting is only one component that informs the conscience role, it is a crucial part in the development and/or application of the conscience role. Because the critical conscience role is expected to be involved in all phases of the organizational value-setting process, it can set the scene and ensure all participants are asked the tough questions. The critical conscience is expected to apply dialectical inquiry throughout the process. Dialectical inquiry is the process involves the thesis-counterthesis-synthesis. It requires practitioners to generate questions and arguments, facilitate discussion of advantages and disadvantages, and ensure that the process covers all the possible alternatives to addressing the issue/s.

The agent of critical conscience should be committed to process. Traditionally, most practitioners focus on content and the production of content. And these practitioners tend to enact technician roles and may enact agent of corporate compliance roles. But in addition to their commitment to process, agents of critical conscience should also engage and commit to reflexivity. Their ability to reflect on the situation or issue, its ethics and their roles in addressing the issue/s is integral to the critical conscience role. Reflexivity or reflective-ness (Bronn & Bronn, 2003; Goodpaster, 2000) is an integral part of the process which requires the practitioner to slow down and think about the assumptions, the consequences and the reasons behind a particular action or idea.

Is it possible for public relations/communication practitioners to still offer a genuine service of change within their organizations? How can they perform this service without being party or being an accessory to organizational control?

#### 7.8.2 Champion of critical and dialectical inquiry

Central to a critical conscience role is its location within a culture which respects diversity, honesty, openness and responsiveness. In this cultural environment, employees are able to access a mechanism where they are able to talk and question ideas openly for discussion. But it is important that the people participating in this process are diverse enough to offer a representation of the various stakeholder groups of the organization. In this context, diversity refers not only to people with different cultural, professional, geographical, generational and other demographic or psychographic backgrounds but also

people with different value sets. Although individual values are usually drawn from one's cultural background, changes in the individual's life experiences may have altered that person's values.

To achieve this kind of organizational context requires a commitment to process. A commitment to process is reflective of a dialectical perspective as Benson (1977) suggests. Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff and Virk (2002) wrote about how individuals these days are faced with enormous opportunities for reflexivity:

The current age offers us unparalleled opportunities for individuals because of its high 'reflexivity'. More than ever before, we have access to information about the world and about each other, and that information allows us to reflect on the causes and consequences of our actions. At the same time, however, we are faced with dangers related to unintended consequences of our actions and by our reliance on the knowledge of experts that we do not know and the working of abstract systems that we do not directly control. In the realm of self-identity, increased reflexivity means we are increasingly free to choose not only what we want to do, but also who we want to be. (Calhoun et al., 2002, p. 224)

When the issue of openness is mentioned, it is almost inevitable to discuss the issue of diversity. In particular, with the notion of stakeholder management, where every stakeholder's perspective is sought and considered, the question of diversity is assumed and that different stakeholders will have different viewpoints and differences of opinion. What the company does with these different points of view is the critical question—will the company use the diversity of opinions to improve the company's behaviour or will it use this knowledge to know which opinions to silence?

Drawing from requisite variety, the role of critical conscience is a key ingredient for organizations to adapt and survive in the increasingly complex environment. Embedding this role within the communication practitioner's job description forges a start to encouraging a mature, honest and open relationship between the senior management and their employees. To get to this stage however it is important to prepare the practitioners for this new expectation of their roles by proposing a paradigm shift in public relations education.

As an agent of critical conscience, the public relations/communication practitioner is expected to engage the senior management and other employee subgroups in meaningful dialogue by taking the role of a dialectical inquirer and/or "devil's advocate." The role puts the practitioner in a position of asking the questions, including the tough ones that no one dares to ask, in a way that will encourage discussion and debate. The role of critical conscience is not expected to preach to management or employees what is the ethical thing to do, not necessarily because doing so could be met with a lot of scepticism and cynicism, but it is expected to ask what they think they should do. By planting the seeds of ethical and

moral responsibility in framing the questions, the agent of critical conscience is able to get people to think about certain issues or angles which they may not otherwise have previously considered.

Engagement in this dialectical process is something Pearson (1989) had written about almost 20 years ago in developing his model of public relations. Central to his model of ethical public relations is the dialectical process. Perhaps he was quite ahead of his time, in the same manner Ryan and Martinson (1983) discussed conditions for the organizational conscience. Admittedly practitioners have had to battle with the prevailing conceptions by business leaders about their roles within the organizations. Many practitioners are just starting to gain the leverage, credibility and respect from top management mostly through practitioners' performance in crisis, issues and reputation management.

Similarly, White (1997) cites Hofstede's argument that modern corporations need someone similar to the "medieval king's court jester, a person with direct access to the highest decision-makers, whose institutionalised role it is to challenge values" (1980, cited in White, 1997, p. 160). While the reference to public relations/communication practitioners as 'court jesters' may not seem a favourable one, the expectations towards its institutionalisation and its activities are similar to the critical conscience agency role here proposed.

The critical conscience role echoes the postmodernist approach put forth by Holtzhausen (2002b) who stressed that practitioners should view their organizational activist roles as a "process of encouraging differing and opposing views" (p. 257). If they don't enact this process of encouraging and perhaps, leading the open discussion and the dialectic, then the practitioners are likely to be agents of control or compliance. In these latter roles, the practitioner could be seen as a non-professional/technician in Bivin's (1992) terms. However, this does not mean that practitioners who choose to enact technician roles cannot be or are not ethical practitioners. However the opportunity to make a difference, to engage in social change, albeit in a small way at first, are the hallmarks of a professional and a leader.

Admittedly, as the findings of this study revealed, public relations practitioners have not perceived themselves to be leaders, even if some of them already belong to the Senior Leadership Team. As some of the respondents implied, they felt constrained by the rules of the organization even if they were involved in writing some of them. These constraints may be an outcome of the respondents' mindsets, which may have been informed by the managerialist/functionalist definition of public relations and the manager-technician model of public relations roles. As highlighted in previous chapters, very little research about public relations as a leadership function has emerged in recent years.

While extolling an ethical conscience role is ideal, it may not be as realistic as scholars would like it to be. As the data in this research revealed, many of the respondents, while enjoying a high level of credibility among their peers with whom they have worked, also experienced some challenges with other sectors of their organizations. Some of the respondents' work colleagues see communication practitioners as being powerful and highly influential because of their access to the CEO but others might make negative inferences about them because of this privileged position. Furthermore, some employees may find that communication practitioners assuming an 'ethical' role is hypocritical, not necessarily because the individuals have been unethical themselves, but because the "practice in general" does not have a very ethical reputation. Of course it can be argued that this is the reason why practitioners have to establish themselves as being an ethical conscience. One of the difficulties mentioned earlier is that the field of public relations does not have a single philosophical stance that underpins its scholarship and practice (L Grunig, 1992). One factor attributed to this is the absence of philosophy and ethics in the educational curriculum of public relations studies.

To address these concerns, the critical conscience role is possibly a realistic pathway towards the ethical conscience role. Why is the public relations/communication practitioner best suited for this role?

### 7.8.3 Understanding of organizational processes and philosophy

Similar to the reasons given by other scholars (Ryan & Martinson, 1983; Judd, 1989), public relations/communication practitioners have access to research information across all disciplines, an awareness of issues, current and historical which forms part of the information arsenal of practitioners. In fact, the Excellence Study found that the "one factor that most influences the playing of advanced roles is the contribution that communication makes to strategic planning and decision-making through research" (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 117). Practitioners by virtue of their environmental scanning capabilities are equipped with the ability to identify, analyse, interpret and synthesise key issues that could impact on an organization's values. Communication practitioners' expertise in defining publics, strategy development, and audience analysis provide them a framework for engaging in tactful debate, engaging in inquiry and a dialectical, or the thesis-antithesis-synthesis, process. Communication practitioners also possess excellent written and verbal skills which allow them to inform and influence their audiences. They also possess rhetorical and research skills and empathetic attributes to elicit input from different groups of people. However these skills and attributes depend on the kind of educational preparation the practitioner has had.

Furthermore this type of role requires the support and endorsement of the senior leadership because it requires an openness and maturity to engage in critical thought within the organization. To fully appreciate the value of this normative role requires that the activity of being a dialectical inquirer and offering alternative viewpoints be embedded in the position description of the future communication practitioner.

As Spicer (1997) and others have suggested, being part of an organization is already a political act and it is quite expected that employees will engage in organisational politics. However not all communication practitioners are knowledgeable or comfortable with the politics of the organization, and as such it would be useful to 'protect' them from the negative consequences of asking the hard and tough questions, particularly of management, by having this duty explicit in their job descriptions. Bivins (1987) already pointed out that no one would recommend practitioners put their jobs on the line, in what he terms "job suicide", for a "slight moral infraction" (p. 200). Embedding the activity of dialectical inquiry in the position description of the communication practitioner is the first step to encouraging practitioners to enact the role.

The agent of conscience role shares some attributes to Bivins' (1987, 1989) conception of the advisor/manager role. In expanding the manager-technician dichotomy, he distinguished between the manager as advisor and the technician as advocate. These two conceptions have similarities with this study's agent of conscience and agent of compliance, respectively.

Similar to Bivins' (1987) advisor/manager role, the agent of conscience is expected to exercise the "ability, and duty, to present all viewpoints" (p. 196). While the advisor/manager role also is expected to enact independent decision-making, the agent of conscience is expected to act more as a guide towards moral decision-making. Whereas the advisor/manager role is expected to be objective, the agent of conscience is expected to be critical by asking questions in a manner akin to the Socratic method of inquiry. Surely one could argue that the nature of the questions can still be manipulative and in fact be leading questions. But this is where the professionalism and the educational background of the critical conscience agent become valuable. In Bivins' (1987, 1989) conception of the communication practitioner as advisor, this role takes on a more professional stance than its counterpart technician as advocate because of its level of autonomy. While defining professionalism on the basis of autonomy seems to be a bit narrow, the agent of conscience can look to the professionalism argument as a basis for his/her role definition.



In their conception of a professional and an institutional advocate, Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) similarly critique the unreal expectations of a social conscience role. They note in particular that institutional leaders do not see public relations as the appropriate function to serve as a social conscience (p. 206). They cite an earlier study by Fitzpatrick (2000, cited in Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001) which indicated that only a third of CEOs they surveyed consulted their public relations advisors in social responsibility issues. As such, they proposed the use of the term “public conscience” as opposed to “social conscience”. They believe that the focus on “public” is more reflective of public relations’ premise of people coming together with similar interests and purpose. They further contend that public relations/communication professionals are able to serve the interest of society by “balancing their clients’ and employers’ interests with the interests of those directly associated with their clients’ decisions and actions” (p. 206).

Earlier studies by Ryan and Martinson (1983) have already established how public relations practitioners prefer to get involved in decision-making or policy development, and not merely represent other people’s decisions. This study’s results however reveal that the practitioners need a stronger resolve to make that happen. While most of the practitioners interviewed do possess very senior and influential positions within the organizations, it seems that they still feel certain levels of constraint in maximising their potential for involvement in decision-making.

To get involved in decision-making, one needs to be part of a group and to be part of a group, one needs to get invited or asked. And how practitioners are asked in some way depends upon their performance and credibility. While the interview findings showed that the respondents often have no problems establishing their credibility with their excellent performance, it still seems that very few respondents actually initiated the establishment of work groups to address several issues, as in the case of organizational values setting. This kind of initiative to establish workgroups is reflective of leadership qualities and perhaps, the choice to lead is still not ingrained in the mindsets of our current practitioners.

Why practitioners choose to be silent, are not asked, or are not part of the group where the opportunity to ask questions exists, may be attributed to politics and its consequences. Therefore, it is also important to remind senior management that effective strategic planning requires a dialectical inquirer (see Schwenk, 1984a, 1984b, 1989; with Cosier, 1980; Mitroff, Emshoff & Kilmann, 1979) as part of the process and the group, and that the senior communication practitioner be appointed to take that role. The agent of critical conscience can remind the senior leadership and the employees of the processes

required for genuine participation, and the values resulting from that process. Clarifying the expectations of the critical conscience role to the whole organization lessens the fear of retribution and other negative consequences once the task is explicitly determined as a requisite responsibility of the communication practitioner. This caveat addresses the fourth condition required for the conscience role (Ryan & Martinson, 1983).

Furthermore, it is argued that exercising a critical conscience role where the dialectical inquiry, devil's advocacy and dissensus activities are expected, demonstrates one's responsibility to the organization. While difficult to comprehend initially, engaging in passionate debate about how the organization should change its policy to better serve the community indicates that the practitioner cares about the organization's future. Engaging in impassioned debate at the risk of losing one's allies in the organization or even one's job may be seen by others as a foolish act. However an 'enlightened' CEO may perceive this act as a demonstration of one's loyalty and commitment. Easily other practitioners may prefer to tread the path of least resistance and self-interest by not questioning the company on issues that may be construed as unethical or irresponsible. This may be true especially if they have previously attempted to pose questions to the leadership and were always met with opposition or no response at all. What needs to be emphasised is that questioning policy and decisions is not only a responsible and professional thing to do, but also reflects a leadership quality. It is within the employee's right, in this case the communication practitioner, as a 'citizen' of the organization to engage the leadership in a dialogue similar to how a nation's citizens can implore its leadership within democratic processes.

Perhaps it requires a progressive minded leader or perhaps it just requires a visionary leader who understands the risks of groupthink and sees the critical conscience role as a necessary investment as part of a risk management strategy. The concept is not necessarily new but its implementation may still be seen as a radical move, or even a political risk for the individual. That is why it is important to ensure that the individual or individuals who are given this 'additional role' be protected from possible repercussions by other members of the group. This protection can come in the form of endorsement from the CEO or simply as part of their employment contracts.

Instrumentalist organizations who view inquiry as a deterrent to efficiency and effectiveness may find it difficult to progress towards ethical and socially responsible behaviour. Many organizations call on the public relations/communication practitioner either in the midst of a crisis or when it is too late and all the practitioner can do then is try to put out the fires others had started. Whether this position is a

position practitioners wish to continue and perpetuate for the future of the profession is what practitioners and the industry need to seriously consider.

Within the context of corporate governance, White (1997) argues that ethical and moral questioning is and should be part of the public relations process. While the questions he proposes still reflect a bias in favour of the organization, he argues that organizations who 'allow' practitioners to question and challenge management decisions on moral grounds could avoid problems with their reputation, saving them the all important resources of time and money. White (1997) outlines the other benefits for organizations whose practitioners enact a moral questioning role. These include the potential "to improve the quality of decision-making, improve the climate for communication within the organization, and improve the organization's capacity to be innovative, competitive and successful" (White, 1997, p. 167).

Posing questions to management and to the employees should not to be confused with disloyalty or 'grudging submission' (Stoker, 2005, p. 273). On the contrary, Stoker (2005) argues that public relations practitioners "show loyalty to loyalty by persuading management that the organization's interest are intertwined with the public interest" (p. 277). This statement means that the practitioners choose which organizations they work with so that loyalty will not be a major issue when situations that call for it arise. In defining loyalty as a virtue, he argues that by being quiet and "refusing to give voice to one's concerns, one forsakes responsibility" (Stoker, 2005, p. 282).

In the same manner, Stoker (2005) stresses that a practitioner's loyalty to an organization that is worthy of loyalty is considered ethical when he/she stays in the organization long enough to know that he/she can influence change in the organization. He stresses the importance of optimism and hope that the organization will change and the practitioner's input to make a difference as reflective of virtuous loyalty. Furthermore, Stoker (2005) also points out that the practitioner need not have direct influence on the decision makers, who most likely will be members of the dominant coalition, but "influence on an influential—who has the power to make the change," which could very well be the CEO. This supports the argument about access to the CEO may also be, or sometimes be more, influential than membership in the dominant coalition.

As Moss and Green (2001) contend, public relations/communication practitioners who are in managerial positions do have a choice about which parts of the job they wish to emphasise as well as how they want to do the job. Therefore it is up to the individual public relations/communication

practitioners to consciously choose which particular agency role they wish to enact—whether they choose to be an agent of conscience, an agent of control or an agent of compliance/consensus.

#### 7.8.4 Focus on leadership role

The role of critical conscience through its activities as a devil's advocate or initiating dialectical inquiry in the organization is an opportunity that exists for practitioners. But to do so requires them to rethink the practitioner role beyond the manager-technician typology. As proposed, the focus of public relations scholarship and industry on managerial roles has limited their ability to think of their roles as leadership roles.

Following the literature on transformational leadership, the leader is expected to use his or her charisma and intelligence to inspire the followers to think beyond one's self-interest (Bass, 1999). Furthermore, leaders are in a position to do the right thing (Cheney et al., 2004). Public relations practitioners who enact a conscience role are required to think and act as leaders so they can encourage and engage their colleagues to enact their moral agency.

If communication practitioners pursue a leadership role, they can explore all the potential reactions, feelings and opinions of the organization's stakeholders and perhaps be able to alert the organization's senior management about potential problems with certain policies. When practitioners take on or think on behalf of their internal and external stakeholders, and as part of their expected role, deliberately offer ideas or pose questions which may be diametrically opposed to the organization's stance, and provide an argument strong enough for the organization to either change its stance or reconsider a more suitable alternative, then the practitioner has been able to exercise his or her ethical responsibility.

While Broom and Dozier's manager-technician typology reflects some of the leadership activities classified under management, it seems that the distinctions between leadership and management cannot be ignored. As such, it may be appropriate to extend this typology to include a third component—leader, to comprise a leader/manager/technician typology. Interview responses in this study have indicated that practitioners are already practising as leaders. It is time that they are formally recognised and acknowledged as such.

Furthermore, when practitioners see themselves as leaders, then they may be more inclined to enact the conscience role because of the expectations for leaders to 'do the right thing'. Related to this is the importance of leaders' modelling behaviour.

The critical conscience role as a leadership role is expected to engage in dialectical inquiry, perhaps not only in the organizational value-setting process, but across various organizational processes as required. And while organizational change literature emphasises the importance of leadership communication, it also underscores the value of behavioural modelling. Respondents in this study echoed Larkin and Larkin (1994) by saying that organizational values must be lived, and that the senior management/leadership should lead by example and behave in the manner they expect their employees to behave.

In the same manner, public relations/communication practitioners who engage in upward dialectical inquiry must also be prepared to receive questions from all directions—from their supervisors as well as their subordinates and colleagues. The key to this process however is for the communication practitioner to engender a collegial environment within the organization where every employee has a right, as a corporate citizen, to ask questions of the management. Bronn and Bronn (2003) refer to these as organizational learning skills which include reflection, inquiry and advocacy.

While these dialectical processes may be seen as threatening to organizational stability as Argyris suggested (cited in Senge, 1999), they are better seen as strengthening the processes of workplace democracy, preparing the organization to respond to demands from the wider community, and demanding a moral framework for corporate governance (Weick, 2001; Weiland, 2005).

The focus on encouraging questioning within organizations is related to organizational learning as advocated by Senge (1999) which Weick (2001) refers to as an ‘attitude to wisdom’. With communication practitioners being seen as ‘experts’, it is important that they do not engage in hubris and instead view wisdom as an attitude. According to Weick (2001), viewing wisdom as an attitude allows people to believe that they can improve their capability for wise action. Weick (2001) regards wisdom as the balance between knowing and doubting, or having too much confidence and too much caution.

An attitude to wisdom may be one way people in complex systems deal with the fallibility of their knowledge and remain adaptive. To maintain an attitude of wisdom, people can introduce doubt into a state of overconfidence by emphasizing difference and contrasts among events, minimizing connections between new facts and old facts, reducing their tendency to overjustify their actions, removing filters on informational inputs, recognizing the fallacy of centrality, increasing conceptual slack to show that there is more than one way to interpret data, and distributing different portions of what is known among several people (Weick, 2001, p. 376).

To sum up, the agent of critical conscience role is an appropriate normative public relations role which integrates previously discussed concepts but reconstructed to make it more meaningful to contemporary

workplace conditions. This role incorporates the notions of autonomy, throughput, challenge and questioning, dialectical inquiry, devil's advocacy, genuine dialogue, going beyond legal compliance, leaders' encouragement of questions, engagement in the discursive process, courage, and leadership.

The agent of critical conscience is expected to undertake the following activities:

- 1) engage and lead the group/organization in reflective thought;
- 2) encourage discussions and inquiry by various stakeholders, including marginal ones;
- 3) provide the voice for stakeholders who are marginal or who do not have a voice in the organization;
- 4) articulate the moral and ethical consequences of organizational decisions;
- 5) remind management and employees of ethical and moral responsibilities at individual, group and organizational levels; and
- 6) ensure breadth and depth of knowledge about business and organizational environments in which they operate.

However describing the characteristics of the role and the activities of the agent are not sufficient.

Rethinking the public relations/communication practitioner's role in this manner requires a concerted effort between academia and industry especially as it integrates a paradigm shift that may be deemed radical by some quarters.

#### 7.8.5 Implications for education: rethinking public relations education curriculum

Drawing on Rest and Narvaez's (1994) proposals, education is an intervening factor in ethical professional practice. What this means is that the more educated the communication practitioner is, the more likely that he or she will engage in ethical practice. The assumption here of course is that the public relations curricula are sufficient and appropriate.

This new way of thinking about the communication practitioner's role also requires a new way of teaching public relations. One of the things the research revealed is that most if not all of the respondents endorsed the public relations as a management function paradigm. Granted that all of them were working in for-profit organizations where the management function perspective is expected, this kind of response could only be attributed to the training and education of practitioners over the past two decades in Australia.

To be able to shift the ways we think about public relations/communication practitioners' roles will require a concerted effort among public relations/communication educators and industry practitioners

Many academics (and practitioners working as adjunct lecturers in Australia) have already noted the lack of questions posed by students in their public relations courses (Kilsby, 2005, personal communication). It seems that students in the classrooms attend university to learn “how to do public relations” sometimes without bothering to ask why we do what we do. When the community (which includes prospective students and the academic hierarchy) perceives public relations/communication practice as a vocational or a technical discipline, rather than a professional field based on theory and research, this mode of learning becomes problematic.

While business knowledge has already been suggested in the past as the Achilles heel of most public relations practitioners (Lindenmann & Lapina, 1981), what these research results suggest is that public relations practitioners need to be provided with a well-rounded education—in arts, politics, economics, technology, business management and of course communication-specific knowledge, and more importantly, ethics and moral philosophy. It is not enough for public relations courses to have ethics as an add-on lecture at the end of the semester. As such, this study supports Moloney’s (2006) call for a rethinking of public relations education. Although not quite arguing for as political a perspective as Moloney suggests, I propose that we develop a teaching framework which understands, recognises and addresses the philosophical and political elements in organizational communication.

Also, it seems that an undergraduate education may not be adequate to gain leadership positions that will allow the practitioner to initiate change from within their organizations. As one respondent stated, when her colleagues realised she was completing her masters degree in communication, her already high credibility rating went up a few more notches. This study proposes that public relations practitioners consider postgraduate education, preferably after at least one or two years work in the industry. In this manner, the practitioner will be able to contextualize the issues and concerns on ethics and moral development as they apply to industry practice.

The research also suggests that academics need to review the management function paradigm within the context of power and control. Preparing practitioners to become more skilled in the art of diplomatic but incisive and analytical questioning is an integral part of this educational approach. If future and/or current practitioners wish to engage their own work colleagues, it is imperative to learn about and practise dialogic communication. Educational activities must recognise that asking the right questions is as important as, if not more important than providing the right answers to questions. Public relations and communication educators must also design their pedagogy to allow students to engage in dialectical and critical inquiry in the classroom.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

As the previous chapter discussed the issues emerging from this research and proposed new ways of thinking about public relations roles, this chapter presents the conclusions of the study. This chapter highlights the significance of the study to public relations and organizational communication scholarship.

This chapter aims to connect the research questions with the findings and implications of this research. The first section revisits the research objective by providing a background of the study. The next sections draw conclusions from the research questions developed for the study. And the final section provides recommendations for future research.

### **8.2 Revisiting the study**

This study aimed to examine the roles that public relations and communication practitioners enact during organizational value setting. Furthermore, this research investigated how organizations set their values; how practitioners are involved in organizational value setting; what factors determined their involvement in the organizational value-setting process; and, how perceptions of their own power and influence vis-à-vis their role expectations affected the roles they enact in organizational value setting.

The literature review comprised a multidisciplinary examination of concepts in social psychology, sociology, philosophy, communication, management and public relations. From this review, the research applied a multiple perspectives approach in investigating the roles enacted by practitioners in organizational value setting.

Through the use of in-depth interviews with Australian public relations and communication practitioners, data were collected on their involvement in organizational value setting. These first hand reports of their perceptions provided a rich account of practitioners' understanding of their roles and the perspectives within which they develop their understanding of their roles.

While the study's findings supported the prevailing mindset about public relations and communication practitioners being management functionaries, they also discovered a potential role for practitioners to explore. This normative role will however require public relations educators and practitioners to rethink



their approach to public relations roles. The research also contributes to roles research by its extension of the manager-technician typology.

By exploring their involvement in organizational value setting, this study found that public relations and communication practitioners enact three agency roles: agent of corporate compliance, agent of concertive control and the agent of critical conscience. However, while most respondents in this study tend to primarily enact the compliance and control roles, a few respondents also enacted the conscience roles. The predominance of the compliance and control roles may be attributed to practitioners' predominant managerialist/functionalist perspectives. These perspectives, revealed in their role expectations, could be informed by the respondents' socialization and education. The research found that this predominant perspective, particularly of the manager-technician role, has restricted practitioners' ability to view themselves in leadership roles. As such not very many respondents, while wanting to make change within their organizations and engage the more employees to participate in organizational processes, are able to position themselves as agents of critical conscience. The results reveal that some practitioners are already reporting instances of robust debates, discussions and negotiations although these are exceptions. Clearly the practitioners are constrained too by some level of job insecurity because critical roles are not always welcomed in most organizations or by its members.

However as the analysis shows, the agent of critical conscience role is important to engaging organizations to be more reflective, more inquiring, moral and socially responsible. By taking the role of dialectical inquirer and being committed to process, the agent of critical conscience enables the practitioner to provide a leadership role within the organization. By posing questions, encouraging employee participation, and engaging employees to think and reflect on their individual values vis-à-vis the organizational values, the agent of critical conscience facilitates the expression of a diversity of voices. To enact this role however, the agent of critical conscience requires certain attributes, capabilities and levels of expertise, not the least of which includes a level of moral maturity.

The key findings of the research are hereby presented, following the research questions of the study.

### **8.3 Involvement in organizational value setting**

The first question sought to find out how organizations set their values as a way of establishing the context for the practitioner's involvement in the process. As the results showed, the respondents generally described the process to include identification of values, refinement, program development, and dissemination of communication strategy. Most of the respondents were involved in the last two

stages. A couple of respondents however added critical steps not previously mentioned in the value setting literature, that indicated a more involved practitioner. These two steps were the planning and evaluation of the value-setting process.

The research also showed support for an earlier claim that most organizations spend little time on the alignment of values phase.

The second question asked if and how are the practitioners involved in the organizational value-setting process. The study found that majority of the respondents were involved in the implementation phase of the organizational value-setting process. The practitioners who reported non-involvement in the organizational value-setting process reasoned that the organizational values already existed before they were employed and had not since required change. Another reason given was that the organizational values were developed in the overseas head office.

Significantly, the research found an overwhelming interest from the respondents in being involved in the organizational value-setting process. However, the nature of their involvement differed based on how they perceived their roles.

Basically when the practitioner is involved in the implementation phase of the process, the practitioner is tasked to develop communication material that supports the organizational values developed by either the management team or the employees. Practitioners who are involved in all phases of the process are expected to ensure the process works and in so doing sometimes incorporate regulatory mechanisms that support the demands of the senior management. The collaborative nature of the process tends to generate a disciplined and unobtrusive form of control by focusing on shared values. Practitioners who volunteered to lead and drive the process are expected to develop the mechanisms that support dialogue and dialectical process. While the respondents in this study may not necessarily practise these elements yet, this potential is being explored.

#### **8.4 Factors affecting role enactment**

The results showed that individual demographic factors do not really determine the practitioner's enactment of a role. But the study found that the individual's perspective informs his or her perceptions of the communication function and his or her role expectations.

Practitioners with a predominantly managerial/functionalist perspective tend to view their role as being subservient to the CEO and management team. Their decision-making is limited to their functional

group. While they see themselves as effective in influencing the CEO, they reciprocate this relationship by acknowledging that the CEO should be the driving influence in setting organizational values.

Practitioners with a predominantly rhetorical/interpretive perspective are able to view themselves as managers who believe in participative decision making and collaborative work. They work in teams and tend to develop their own control mechanisms to support the views of the management.

Practitioners with a predominantly critical/dialectical perspective tend to focus on process and dialogue. They reveal their interest in being part of, developing and driving the organizational value-setting process because they believe that it is an opportunity for them to engender necessary change.

The study found that reporting relationships, based on the distance and access to the CEO, were related to one's involvement in organizational value setting. Furthermore, the location of the head office was also instrumental in determining practitioner's involvement in the organizational value-setting process.

### **8.5 Power and influence**

On the question of how the practitioners' own perceptions of their power and influence affect their participation in the value-setting process, the research exposed a potential of power and influence within the organization and with the dominant coalition. The research also revealed that the practitioners' conceptions of their own power were restricted by their perceptions of their roles. The practitioners reported leadership attributes such as personality and current membership in leadership teams as sources of their influences. These bode well in exploring leadership roles for public relations and communication practitioners. In some way, exploring this leadership function may provide the practitioners with a 'righteous' way to practise so that they can engender change within their organizations.

### **8.6 Emergence of three agency roles**

Based on the results of the empirical analysis, this research discovered three conceptions of agency roles namely, the agent of corporate compliance, the agent of concertive control and the agent of critical conscience. The agent of corporate compliance is generally not involved in setting organizational values, and if they were, they would be involved in the articulation and dissemination of organizational values developed by others in the organization. The agent of concertive control is generally involved in all phases of the process including participating in the focus groups where organizational values are identified. Usually in a managerial role, the agent of concertive control engages in collaborative work

and works with other organizational members in ensuring that the consultative process is effective and undertaken based on guidelines set by the dominant coalition. The agent of critical conscience is not only involved in the process but is part of the group that plans and evaluates the value-setting process. Furthermore, the agent of critical conscience engages the organizational members including the top management in robust discussions, dialectical inquiry, and healthy debates.

Most of the respondents in the study primarily enact agencies of corporate compliance and concertive control. While the conscience role was not clearly represented among this study's respondents, a few respondents did report characteristics and current activities of the agent of critical conscience. As previously stated however, these three roles are not mutually exclusive. In fact, several respondents clearly enacted more than one agency role.

## **8.7 Significance of the study**

On the basis of these findings, the study suggests further exploration of the roles conceptualised in this study. To do so will require the following:

### 8.7.1 Rethinking public relations roles research

The manager-technician typology was formulated in 1979 and requires a revisit to the relevance of its applicability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the research results show that not much has changed with the thinking of our practitioners, they also revealed that the concept and practice of leadership is not lost on them. As such, it seems appropriate to distinguish the leadership role from the managerial role as most management scholars have, and apply this distinction to the role typology. This thesis argued that a communication leader role be added to the manager-technician typology.

Secondly, contextual factors such as globalisation, the access to the Internet and notions of empowerment have given rise to individuals seeing themselves as instruments of change. Despite some concerns that systems and structures may constrain their ability to make changes, the notion of individual agency also suggests the individual's ability to construct the structure and system to make the change occur.

Thirdly, while knowledge about structures, systems, relationships and people's interpretations of symbols are important, exploring sources of power and influence, politics and areas of control are integral in developing a holistic understanding of public relations roles. In particular, it is also useful to know the processes in which the public relations/communication practitioner is involved to establish the

extent, breadth and depth of the relationships and interactions accrued to the role or to the person occupying the role.

### 8.7.2 Review public relations education curriculum

Given the complexity and diversity of the globalized environment, it is useful to incorporate a multiple perspectives approach in public relations scholarship. The current dominance of the managerialist/functionalist perspective in public relations teaching and research is doing the industry and the students a disservice. While some inroads have been made in introducing the rhetorical and critical perspectives in recent years, the scholarship approach has always been singular—that one perspective is better than the other. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge that multiple perspectives are appropriate for the multicultural and pluralist environments in which public relations operates. It is also acknowledged that there may be perspectives other than the three described in this thesis that would be appropriate to explore.

Furthermore, it is suggested that organizational values must be pursued as an area of study within the context of understanding organizational cultures. If public relations and communication practitioners want to actively make a difference in society through their organizations, their involvement must go beyond articulation of organizational values and immerse themselves in the value-setting process.

Seeing the impact of public relations education on the mindset of current and future practitioners, regularly revisiting public relations curricula is an imperative. In particular, courses in ethics and moral philosophy and its applications to public relations must be introduced as compulsory in both undergraduate and postgraduate education. As previous research (Rest & Narvaez, 1994) has found, ethical training and education are helpful intervention mechanisms in moral development.

## **8.8 Recommendations for future research**

In its attempt to build the body of knowledge in public relations roles and public relations theory, this research also triggers more questions for future research.

While this current study presents new conceptions of the public relations roles, it is important to note that the study is exploratory and thus offers more opportunities for future research. First, it would be useful to know whether these conceptions of public relations roles apply to roles in not-for-profit and government organizations. It would be useful to contrast these results with practitioner responses from

the not-for-profit sector particularly noting their levels of involvement. In most cases, not-for-profit organizations, such as charities, are established based on a cause or strong value ethic, rather than a profit motive. Communication practitioners join these organizations with a totally different mindset compared to those in the corporate sector. Second, it would be useful to interview non-communication practitioners to assess whether the communication practitioners' self-perceptions of their roles are valid. The congruence of self-perceptions with others' perceptions as well as self-expectations with others' expectations is important in understanding one's role. While maturity of organizations is a difficult construct to ascertain because most organizations refuse or are unable to define which stage of the organizational life cycle they are in, exploring this construct as it relates to public relations roles in the organization may be further explored. Furthermore, another study could explore whether these agency roles are applicable in non-Anglo-Saxon cultures, particularly if juxtaposed with Hofstede's (1980) notions of power distance.

## **8.9 Summary**

By examining practitioner involvement in organizational value setting, this study concludes that Australian communication practitioners do not primarily enact the agency of critical conscience role. Instead, the study found practitioners to primarily enact the agent of corporate compliance and agent of concertive control roles. However, while practitioner involvement in organizational value setting was used to examine whether practitioners enacted the conscience roles within their organizations, this study also found the potential for a more widespread enactment of the organizational conscience role. Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights on the practitioners' perceptions of their influence, their power, and their roles in organizational change.

The three agency roles that emerged from a multiple perspectives analysis enhance our understanding of public relations roles in the current context of pluralism and complexity. Through their active inquiry in the development of organizational values, communication practitioners possess a great opportunity in engendering change from within. However communication practitioners should ensure that they are equipped with the appropriate education, knowledge and training in values, ethics and moral development to enact the critical conscience role.

In encouraging the agency of critical conscience role, this research calls for a paradigm shift in how practitioners and educators view the communicators' role within the organization. Focusing on dialectical inquiry, I argue that we integrate this activity in our communication classrooms and imbed it in the job descriptions of public relations/communication practitioners. This way, we address our

ethical and social responsibilities as individuals within our increasingly complex and changing world. This is my application of Gandhi's verse—of becoming the change I want to see in this world. This is my contribution to becoming part of the change.

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## **APPENDIX 1: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

The Plain Language Statement was sent to interested respondents to provide a background and scope of the study. Respondents usually confirmed their participation after receiving this document.

**Plain Language Statement  
(to be used in a research project involving human participation)**

17 September 2004

Building 6, Level 3  
124 La Trobe Street  
Melbourne VIC  
3000 Australia

GPO Box 2476V  
Melbourne VIC  
3001 Australia

Tel. +61 3 9925 3146  
Fax +61 3 9639 1685  
• [www.rmit.edu.au](http://www.rmit.edu.au)

Dear

My name is Marianne Sison and I am undertaking a PhD at RMIT University. The title of my research is "The role of communications and public relations practitioners in organizational value setting."

This research is being undertaken to provide some qualitative data on the influence public relations/communication practitioners may have on organizational value setting. The research aims to explore the impact and role of public relations/communication practitioners in how organizations set their values. It seeks to understand the level of influence, if any, of the communication practitioners in the process and discover variables that may affect this influence.

You have been approached for this study because of your experience and your position within the organization. Your perspective as a communication staff member is critical to the validity of this research.

As such, I will be interviewing you for about 30-45 minutes and the interview will include questions about your views of the organizational process, the communication function and some demographic data. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

The data gathered will be stored securely (in a lockable filing cabinet and/or on a password-protected computer drive) and will only be accessible to my supervisor, the examiner, and myself. All data collected during the course of the research will be archived on a confidential basis for a minimum of five years from the examination date. No data will be disclosed to any other persons, with the exception of possible academic publication in conference papers, articles and book chapters. In the thesis itself and any subsequent publications I will use pseudonyms and generalizing identifiable context to ensure the confidentiality of data.

If you require further information, please feel free to contact me by phone (9925-3127) or by email ([marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au](mailto:marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au)). If you need further information about my research, you may also contact my supervisors: Dr Sheldon Harsel ([Sheldon.harsel@rmit.edu.au](mailto:Sheldon.harsel@rmit.edu.au)), and Associate Professor David Kimber ([david.kimber@rmit.edu.au](mailto:david.kimber@rmit.edu.au)).

I will contact you for a suitable time.

Yours sincerely

Marianne D Sison, BA, MA, MPRIA  
Senior Lecturer & Program Manager  
Master of Arts (Communication)

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from: [www.rmit.edu.au/council/hrec](http://www.rmit.edu.au/council/hrec)



## **APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM**

The Consent Form was brought to the interviews to confirm the respondent's willingness to participate in the interview. Signing the consent form indicated the participant's agreement to the terms cited on the form.

**RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE****Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information**

<b>FACULTY OF</b>	<b>DESIGN &amp; SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>		
<b>DEPARTMENT OF</b>	<b>APPLIED COMMUNICATION</b>		
Name of participant:	_____		
Project Title:	<b>ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN ORGANISATIONAL VALUE-SETTING</b>		
Name(s) of investigators:	(1) <b>MARIANNE SISON</b>	Phone:	<b>9925 3127</b>
	(2) _____	Phone:	_____

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.
3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
  - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
  - (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
  - (d) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
  - (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to \_\_\_\_\_ (researcher to specify). Any information which will identify me will not be used.

**Participant's Consent**

<b>Name:</b>	_____	<b>Date:</b>	_____
	(Participant)		
<b>Name:</b>	_____	<b>Date:</b>	_____
	(Witness to signature)		

**Where participant is under 18 years of age:**

I consent to the participation of \_\_\_\_\_ in the above project.

<b>Signature:</b>	(1) _____	(2) _____	<b>Date:</b>	_____
	(Signatures of parents or guardians)			
<b>Name:</b>	_____		<b>Date:</b>	_____
	(Witness to signature)			

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address.
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### **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE (FIRST VERSION)**

The first version of the Interview Guide was used with the first five respondents. This version does not include questions on influence and perceptions of value, and includes a lower income range.

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS/  
COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS**

---

**Introduction:**

*This survey aims to explore the involvement of public relations practitioners in the organisational value setting process. Value-setting in this study refers to the establishment, creation, change, modification of organisational values. Most organisations have stated values as part of the corporate mission/vision statement. Some organisations have a separate statement of values. If your organisation does not have any of the above, please discontinue. All information will be anonymous.*

*The questionnaire has seven parts—your organisation, your role in the organisation, your organisation's values, the value setting process, and your individual demographic information. Completing the questionnaire may take approximately 30 minutes.*

**PART A: YOUR ORGANISATION**

*This section aims to find out about the organisation in which you are currently employed. Please tick the box that best describes your organisation.*

1. Industry your organisation belongs

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesaling         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retailing                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport & Storage                | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Education                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance & Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Community Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural/Recreational Services     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property & Business Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation, Cafes & Restaurants |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal/Other Services     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls specify) _____          |  |

2. Nature of business

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private corporation       | <input type="checkbox"/> Not for profit organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government                | <input type="checkbox"/> Public company              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls specify) _____ |  |

3. Year organisation was established

4. Organisational size: number of employees

- 1-20       21-200       201 plus

5. Ownership

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> independent Australian owned   | <input type="checkbox"/> partly owned by foreign company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fully owned by foreign company | <input type="checkbox"/> government owned                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____   |  |

6. Has your organisation undergone any recent changes?  YES       NO

If YES, please describe nature of change

7. What triggered the change?



8. How would you describe your organisation's culture?  
participative      authoritative      other (pls specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B: YOUR ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION**

*This section aims to find out about your role in the organisation. Please answer in the space provided below each question.*

9. What is your official title?
10. How many years/months have you been with your organisation?
11. To whom do you report? (Title of your immediate/direct supervisor)
12. How many staff report to you?
13. Please list your key responsibilities and rank order them according to your priority.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
14. On a day-to-day basis, with which business units/ departments would you regularly liaise? (Can you draw the networking lines you would have?)
15. For each of the departments/business you mentioned in Q14, how would you describe the nature of your interactions? (You may tick more than one answer.)
- consultative
- approval
- informative
- persuasive
- other(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
-

16. In your opinion, how would you describe (in % terms) the level of impact your Involvement has on business decisions?

**PART C. STRATEGIC PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING**

*This section explores the strategic planning process. Environmental scanning is defined as "collecting information about the world outside the organization ... to construct a good enough map of that world for strategic decision-making (Dozier, et al, 1995:199)."*

17. To your knowledge, who are the people involved in developing the company's strategic plan?

18. Would you be involved in your company's strategic planning activities?  
 YES     NO (Go to Q19)

- 18a. If Yes, what would be the nature of your involvement?

18b. What level of involvement do you have in developing the plan?

18c. What areas are you asked to contribute to in particular?

19. If No, why are you not involved?

20. Can you describe the process by which your company develops your strategic plan?

21. To your knowledge, who conceptualizes the vision/mission statement?

22. To what extent is research from the external and internal environment used in developing the vision/mission statement? Who is responsible for the research input?

23. To your knowledge, how is environmental scanning undertaken in your organization? Who is responsible for this activity?

24. Who are involved in environmental scanning and how are these information collated? Who decides on the priorities?

**PART D: YOUR ORGANISATION'S VALUES**

*This section asks about your organisation's values.*

25. Does your organisation have a
- a. Vision statement?     YES     NO
  - b. Mission statement?     YES     NO
  - c. Values statement?     YES     NO
  - d. Code of conduct/ethics     YES     NO

26. To the items you answered YES, how are these statements communicated?

- a. Vision statement \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Mission statement \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Values statement \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Code of conduct/ethics \_\_\_\_\_

**For questions 27-31, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by ticking the appropriate box using the following codes: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree.**

- 27. My individual values are aligned with my organisation's values.  
SA A N D SD
- 28. I knew the organisation's values before I joined the company.  
SA A N D SD
- 29. The organisation's values were very influential in my decision to take up employment with my current employer. SA A N D SD
- 30. I thought the organisational values, or lack thereof, needed to be changed and required my input. SA A N D SD
- 31. I have never experienced an occasion when my personal values conflicted with my organisation's values. SA A N D SD

**PART E: VALUE SETTING**

*This section intends to explore your involvement in the value setting process.*

- 32. Have you been involved in developing your organisation's:
  - a. vision statement YES NO
  - b. mission statement YES NO
  - c. code of conduct/ethics YES NO
  - d. values YES NO
- 33. If you answered YES to the any of the above items, can you briefly describe the nature of your involvement for each one (eg membership on committee, writing up code of conduct manual, editing of draft vision statement).
  - a. vision statement
  - b. mission statement
  - c. code of conduct/ethics

d. values statements

33a. If you answered NO to any of the items in Q32, why were you not involved?

33b. Would you have wanted to be involved? Why/why not?

34. To your knowledge, who are the organisational members involved in the development or re-development of organisational values (eg head of HR; CEO; Board Chairperson; Founder/owner, yourself)

35. From the people you listed above, can you estimate the amount of involvement (out of 100%) each person(including yourself) has in setting/re-developing organisational values?

36. Of the people you listed in the previous question, who do you think has the most influence in organisational value setting? Rank order them according to who has the most influence (1as most influential, 2 next influential, etc.)

37. In your opinion, who do you think **should** have the most influence in setting/ redeveloping your organisation's values? Why?

38. In your opinion, do you think that public relations/ corporate communication staff **should** have a role in setting an organisation's values?  
 YES     NO Why/why not?

39. Do you think that specific training/experience/qualifications are required to be involved in organisational value setting?  YES     NO

39a. Do you think that your current qualifications/backgrounds are sufficient for your involvement in value setting?  YES  NO

39b. If N, what training/background/qualifications do you think you need to be involved in organisational value setting?

40. In which areas of the business do you think you have the most influence?

41. Why do you think you have the most influence in those areas?

- Professional experience – no of years working in area
- Expertise – amount of knowledge in the area
- Academic qualifications
- Personality traits
- Gender
- Seniority in the company – length of service in company
- Demonstrated performance in company – reliability
- Excellent communication skills – persuasive, articulate, to the point
- Integrity – trustworthy
- Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

42. In which areas of the business do you think you have the least influence?

43. Do you want to increase your influence in this area?  Yes  No  
Why/why not?

#### PART F: ABOUT YOU

*This section will ask questions about your demographic background. Some of these questions are of a personal nature and answers are optional. However, to establish a better profile of our communication practitioners, I would encourage that you provide as much detail as possible. Answers will remain confidential.*

1. Age range  
 18-24  25-34  35-44  
 45-54  55-64  65 and over
  2. Gender  Male  Female
  3. Income range  
 below \$25000  \$25000-39999  \$40000-59999  
 \$60000-79999  \$80000-99999  \$100000 & above
  4. Ethnic background \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Education (Please tick the qualifications you've received and state the main area of study eg BA - journalism)  
 High school  
 TAFE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bachelors degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Graduate diploma \_\_\_\_\_  
 Masters \_\_\_\_\_  
 PhD \_\_\_\_\_
  6. No of years in communication/PR \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Previous career (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ no of years \_\_\_\_\_
-

8. State/Postcode (residence) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Religious background \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE RESULTS, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO [marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au](mailto:marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au)

#### **APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE (FINAL VERSION)**

The final version of the Interview Guide was used with 25 respondents. Changes include additional questions on influence, perception of value, and income range. The first five respondents were sent the additional questions but not all of them replied back.

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS/  
COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS**

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**Introduction:**

*This survey aims to explore the involvement of public relations practitioners in the organisational value setting process. Value-setting in this study refers to the establishment, creation, change, modification of organisational values. Most organisations have stated values as part of the corporate mission/vision statement. Some organisations have a separate statement of values. If your organisation does not have any of the above, please discontinue. All information will be anonymous.*

*The questionnaire has seven parts—your organisation, your role in the organisation, your organisation's values, the value setting process, and your individual demographic information. Completing the questionnaire may take approximately 30 minutes.*

**PART A: YOUR ORGANISATION**

*This section aims to find out about the organisation in which you are currently employed. Please tick the box that best describes your organisation.*

1. Industry your organisation belongs

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesaling         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retailing                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport & Storage                | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Education                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance & Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Community Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural/Recreational Services     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property & Business Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation, Cafes & Restaurants |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal/Other Services     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls specify) _____          |  |

2. Nature of business

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private corporation       | <input type="checkbox"/> Not for profit organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government                | <input type="checkbox"/> Public company              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls specify) _____ |  |

3. Year organisation was established

4. Organisational size: number of employees

- |                               |                                 |                                   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-200 | <input type="checkbox"/> 201 plus |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

5. Ownership

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> independent Australian owned   | <input type="checkbox"/> partly owned by foreign company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fully owned by foreign company | <input type="checkbox"/> government owned                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____   |  |

6. Has your organisation undergone any recent changes?  YES  NO

If YES, please describe nature of change

7. What triggered the change?



8. How would you describe your organisation's culture?  
participative      authoritative      other (pls specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B: YOUR ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION**

*This section aims to find out about your role in the organisation. Please answer in the space provided below each question.*

9. What is your official title?
10. How many years/months have you been with your organisation?
11. To whom do you report? (Title of your immediate/direct supervisor)
12. How many staff report to you?
13. Please list your key responsibilities and rank order them according to your priority.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
14. On a day-to-day basis, with which business units/ departments would you regularly liaise? (Can you draw the networking lines you would have?)

15. For each of the departments/business you mentioned in Q14, how would you describe the nature of your interactions? (You may tick more than one answer.)
- consultative  
approval  
informative  
persuasive  
other(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

16. In your opinion, how would you describe (in % terms) the level of impact your Involvement has on business decisions?

17. In which areas of the business do you think you have the most influence?

18. Why do you think you have the most influence in those areas?

- Professional experience – no of years working in area
- Expertise – amount of knowledge in the area
- Academic qualifications
- Personality traits
- Gender
- Seniority in the company – length of service in company
- Demonstrated performance in company – reliability
- Excellent communication skills – persuasive, articulate, to the point
- Integrity – trustworthy
- Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

19. In which areas of the business do you think you have the least influence?

20. Do you want to increase your influence in this area?    Yes    No  
Why/why not?

For the next set of questions, please use the following scale in answering the following questions: 1 not at all 2 a little 3 some 4 good deal 5 a great deal

21. In the last year, to what extent have you been successful in influencing the following groups/individuals in accepting your recommendations: 1 not at all 2 a little 3 some 4 good deal 5 a great deal

a) the CEO	1	2	3	4	5
b) Board	1	2	3	4	5
c) senior management team	1	2	3	4	5
d) middle management	1	2	3	4	5
e) employees	1	2	3	4	5
f) external stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5

22. To what extent do you informally discuss what is going on in the organization with members of the inner circle? 1 2 3 4 5

23. How often do you informally talk about personal-related issues with members of the inner circle? 1 2 3 4 5

24. To what extent do you participate in informal social functions outside of work with members of the inner circle? 1 2 3 4 5

25. How often do you approach members of the inner circle with a work-related problem or if you want advice on a decision you have to make? 1 2 3 4 5

26. How much does the inner circle value your public relations counsel in comparison to other employees' counsel? 1 2 3 4 5

27. How often is your opinion solicited by the inner circle? 1 2 3 4 5
28. How often do you participate in the important decision-making meetings of the inner circle? 1 2 3 4 5
29. To what extent does the inner circle consider the work that you do to be tied to the organisation's success? 1 2 3 4 5
30. To what extent are you treated with respect by the inner circle?  
1 2 3 4 5
31. To what extent are your values supported by the inner circle?  
1 2 3 4 5
32. How supported are you in your work environment? 1 2 3 4 5

**PART C. STRATEGIC PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING**

*This section explores the strategic planning process. Environmental scanning is defined as "collecting information about the world outside the organization ... to construct a good enough map of that world for strategic decision-making (Dozier, et al, 1995:199)."*

33. To your knowledge, who are the people involved in developing the company's strategic plan?
34. Would you be involved in your company's strategic planning activities?  
 YES     NO (Go to Q35)
- 34a. If Yes, what would be the nature of your involvement?
- 34b. What level of involvement do you have in developing the plan?
- 34c. What areas are you asked to contribute to in particular?
35. If No, why are you not involved?
36. Can you describe the process by which your company develops your strategic plan?
37. To your knowledge, who conceptualizes the vision/mission statement?
38. To what extent is research from the external and internal environment used in developing the vision/mission statement? Who is responsible for the research input?
39. To your knowledge, how is environmental scanning undertaken in your organization? Who is responsible for this activity?
-

40. Who are involved in environmental scanning and how are these information collated? Who decides on the priorities?

**PART D: YOUR ORGANISATION'S VALUES**

*This section asks about your organisation's values.*

41. Does your organisation have a
- a. Vision statement?       YES       NO
  - b. Mission statement?     YES       NO
  - c. Values statement?       YES       NO
  - d. Code of conduct/ethics  YES       NO
42. To the items you answered YES, how are these statements communicated?
- a. Vision statement \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Mission statement \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Values statement \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Code of conduct/ethics \_\_\_\_\_

***For questions 43-47, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by ticking the appropriate box using the following codes: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree.***

43. My individual values are aligned with my organisation's values.  
 SA    A    N    D    SD
44. I knew the organisation's values before I joined the company.  
 SA    A    N    D    SD
45. The organisation's values were very influential in my decision to take up employment with my current employer.  SA    A    N    D    SD
46. I thought the organisational values, or lack thereof, needed to be changed and required my input.  SA    A    N    D    SD
47. I have never experienced an occasion when my personal values conflicted with my organisation's values.     SA    A    N    D    SD

**PART E: VALUE SETTING**

*This section intends to explore your involvement in the value setting process.*

48. Have you been involved in developing your organisation's:
- a. vision statement                       YES       NO

- b. mission statement  YES  NO
- c. code of conduct/ethics  YES  NO
- d. values  YES  NO

49. If you answered YES to the any of the above items, can you briefly describe the nature of your involvement for each one (eg membership on committee, writing up code of conduct manual, editing of draft vision statement).

- a. vision statement
  
- b. mission statement
  
- c. code of conduct/ethics
  
- d. values statements

49a. If you answered NO to any of the items in Q32, why were you not involved?

49b. Would you have wanted to be involved? Why/why not?

50. To your knowledge, who are the organisational members involved in the development or re-development of organisational values (eg head of HR; CEO; Board Chairperson; Founder/owner, yourself)

51. From the people you listed above, can you estimate the amount of involvement (out of 100%) each person(including yourself) has in setting/re-developing organisational values?

52. Of the people you listed in the previous question, who do you think has the most influence in organisational value setting? Rank order them according to who has the most influence (1as most influential, 2 next influential, etc.)

53. In your opinion, who do you think **should** have the most influence in setting/ redeveloping your organisation's values? Why?
54. In your opinion, do you think that public relations/ corporate communication staff **should** have a role in setting an organisation's values?  
 YES     NO Why/why not?
55. Do you think that specific training/experience/qualifications are required to be involved in organisational value setting?  YES     NO
- 55a. Do you think that your current qualifications/backgrounds are sufficient for your involvement in value setting?  YES     NO
- 55b. If N, what training/background/qualifications do you think you need to be involved in organisational value setting?

**PART G: ABOUT YOU**

*This section will ask questions about your demographic background. Some of these questions are of a personal nature and answers are optional. However, to establish a better profile of our communication practitioners, I would encourage that you provide as much detail as possible. Answers will remain confidential.*

1. Age range  
 18-24       25-34       35-44  
 45-54       55-64       65 and over
2. Gender       Male       Female
3. Income range  
 below \$40,000       \$40000-59999       \$60000-79999  
 \$80000-99999       \$100,000 –199,999       \$200,000 & above
4. Ethnic background \_\_\_\_\_
5. Education (Please tick the qualifications you've received and state the main area of study eg BA - journalism)  
 High school  
 TAFE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bachelors degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Graduate diploma \_\_\_\_\_  
 Masters \_\_\_\_\_  
 PhD \_\_\_\_\_
6. No of years in communication/PR \_\_\_\_\_
7. Previous career (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ no of years \_\_\_\_\_
8. State/Postcode (residence) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Religious background \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE RESULTS, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO [marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au](mailto:marianne.sison@rmit.edu.au)