‘Persuasive Communication And Its Ethics.’

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.

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ABSTRACT

Public relations has developed as a profession in order to manage communication between different groups of people. This communication process is a persuasive process; which has the ability to influence public opinion. Creating public opinion is often the role of public relations practitioners, as practitioners influence public discourse through the communication processes they manage.

This power to manage public opinion creates ethical dilemmas. Many commentators contend that public relations is a pervasive and negative influence, and demand more accountable and socially responsible behaviour. Despite most public relations industry associations having codes of ethics or conduct, this has not solved the issue of ethics, and many practitioners continue to debate how more ethical behaviour can be achieved.

However, this thesis proposes that it is possible to influence public opinion in a way that is effective, ethical and persuasive; and that this managed communication helps to create balanced public discourse, meeting the needs of stakeholders as well as serving the public interest.

The research examines how managed communication influences public discourse, and the ethical responsibility that this creates. Theories in the areas of public relations, communication and persuasion are explored. Key themes are drawn from each of these areas, and a framework for evaluating persuasive communication is developed. The resulting model challenges traditional two-way communication approaches and offers an alternative multi-sided approach to communication, which seeks to redress the imbalance in public discourse, and suggests a different role for the public relations practitioner.

Multi-sided communication demands that the public relations practitioner accepts responsibility for creating opportunities for different points of view to be expressed in the public domain. This is concluded as one of the key determinants of ethical behaviour, and therefore an important principle of the proposed model.

A model is presented that reflects multi-sided communication and balances the imperatives of communication, persuasion and ethics (CPE model). This model provides an evaluative tool for qualitatively assessing proposed or completed communication campaigns.

This thesis argues that if practitioners were to apply this model, the public would feel that public relations provided a better service to them, and not just to the clients or organisations the practitioner represents. This in turn would help to improve the integrity of the practice of public relations.

It is accepted that the model is not a panacea for the issues the public relations industry faces. Two significant challenges still remain. Firstly, traditional constraints such as time, money and resources will continue to inhibit effective, ethical communication. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is unlikely that a client or organisation will fund or support competing ideas and views.

CHAPTER ONE – AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS IN PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY – HELP OR HINDRANCE?

Few people today would argue against the notion that public relations is a powerful influence on public discourse. History shows us that leaders have long recognised the extent of the influence of public relations. Abraham Lincoln actively sought newspaper editors that he thought would help him get his ideas across to the people and win their support for his policies. The significance he placed on public opinion is apparent in his famous statement that public sentiment is everything (Rivers 1965). Lincoln went on to say, "…he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions" (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000, 46).

Moulding public opinion has become ingrained in the way that our modern society operates. Botan (1997) says that as the information age unfolds, and we become more of an information society, public relations and other strategic communication campaigns will play an ever-larger role in the lives of organisations (5). It is argued that public relations is essential for helping people to understand the world around them (Ewen 1996). The role of the public relations practitioner is to provide information and communicate messages to the public, essentially participating in, and even managing or controlling the discourse that occurs in the public sphere (Ewen 1996; Allan 2001).

If the extent of public relations influence is widely accepted, its impact is not. Many commentators contend that public relations has a pervasive and negative influence. Stauber and Rampton (1995) and Hagar and Burton (1999) claim that public relations practitioners control much of the information the public receives, presenting carefully constructed facades for organisations and avoiding or deflecting attention on certain issues. This phenomenon, they say, is reaching endemic proportions. If we accept that the function of moulding public opinion has such a significant role in society, then it is fair to expect that those who fulfil this function should be open to scrutiny for their actions. Because of the 'controlling' capacity of public relations outlined above, it can be seen how ethical problems can occur (Motion & Leitch 1996). In particular, factors such as power and influence come into effect, as does the right to freedom of speech or expression (Martinson 2000). Less obvious, but equally important are considerations such as whether it is an ethical process or ethical outcome that is more important (Gregory 2000; Kruckeberg 2000; Martinson 1999).

THE INFLUENCE AND ETHICS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations has developed through time because of the need to encourage, motivate or persuade the general population – or parts of it. This has included communicating the wishes of king and state, supporting the participation of armies in war, and convincing the masses of the virtues of different products and causes (Cutlip, Center & Broom 1994; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg 2000; Ewen 1996; Black & Sharpe 1983). History has demonstrated the impact that public relations has had on society and public discourse.

Both Cutlip et al. (1994) and Peart and Macnamara (1991) comment on the watchful eye of the public and media who demand accountability, social responsibility and monitor the action or non-actions of governments and organisations. In order for organisations to manage their profile or reputation in the public sphere, they hire public relations practitioners to mediate between the organisation and its audiences to develop optimal relationships and to provide a channel for communicating messages.

As public relations practitioners seek to improve the persuasiveness of their messages, they focus more and more on the receiver and how they interpret the message – assessing what impact they are having on public discourse. To improve the persuasiveness of their message they work at gaining the attention of target publics, stimulating interest in message content, building a desire to act on the message, and directing the action of those who behave consistently with the message (Cutlip et al. 1994). This process has become more than a communication exercise – public relations practitioners develop detailed strategies and campaigns to achieve success. By doing so, they are 'managing' the communication process (Botan 1997).

Persuasion is fundamental to any public relations campaign (Pendleton 1999), and public relations practitioners are often thought of as manipulators doing their best to deceive and to present an image to the public that is based on lies and half-truths (Gregory 2002; Riley 1993). Ewen (1996, viii) goes as far as saying public relations has become "widely accepted shorthand for subterfuge and deception". This negative perception of public relations, Ewen says, hangs over the industry's head questioning the ethics of those who practice in the industry. Allan (2001), immediate past president of the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand, comments that "the public is right to be concerned and to expect high standards of people in positions of trust", and more importantly for public relations practitioners:

"The public also has a keen interest in the performance of the communications professions, realising the importance to modern lives of having accurate information on which to base opinion and actions" (2001).

Allan notes that as an indicator of public relations as a profession, we (public relations practitioners) have a duty of proper or ethical behaviour to the wider society that matches their expectations.

As indicated in the opening paragraph of this introduction, public relations practitioners have a significant ability to influence public opinion. Within the public sphere, commentators such as Noam Chomsky criticise the way the media control what information is broadcast to the public, claiming they are "gatekeepers" (Achbar 1998). Gatekeepers select which stories are broadcast or printed, how they are presented and to which audiences (Gallagher 1982). Chomsky and others suggest that public relations practitioners are also gatekeepers, choosing or controlling what is distributed to the media and consequently the public – manipulating public discourse by managing what and when information is placed in the public domain.

Stauber and Rampton (1995) and Hagar and Burton (1999) have chronicled the actions of public relations practitioners, arguing that they have become a communications medium in their own right - “an industry designed to alter perception, reshape reality and manufacture consent” (1995, 2). Criticisms such as these mean that the issue of ethics is a key consideration for the industry. While public relations industry associations normally include statements regarding ethics in their code of ethics (the New Zealand, American and British code of ethics can be found in the Appendix on pages A2, A6, and A15), discussions of whether ethical behaviour is being achieved is a constant source of speculation in industry journals, newsletters and conferences, as well as a source of interest and speculation to outsiders.

THE RESEARCH FOCUS

This thesis examines the topic of persuasive communication, and in particular ethics in persuasive communication. In approaching this topic, it will discuss the communication process, the development of public relations, and public discourse. This will provide a clear picture of how public relations impacts on public discourse. To that end, the process and effects of mass communication and persuasion will be reviewed, and the notion of public opinion and public discourse will also be explored, showing how managed communication is used to mould opinion. The issue of what constitutes effective persuasive communication will be examined and criteria for ethical public relations proposed. In particular, the impact of a multi-sided approach on communication and the challenge it poses to traditional two-way communication models will be examined. Based on the theories in these areas, a framework for evaluating effective and ethical public relations will be developed. The purpose of this framework will be to provide a means for analysing the ethics of persuasive communication in campaigns that seek to have an impact on public discourse. This framework will be demonstrated by evaluating a case study.

In addition to developing a framework for evaluating the ethical application of managed communication, the relevance of the framework and the broader notion of ethics to the public relations industry will be discussed. In particular, the questions of whether there are gains to be made from adopting a more ethical approach to the practice of communicating, and whether it is practical, financially and resource-wise to do so, will be examined.

In order to demonstrate this, the thesis will argue that communication is inherently persuasive, but that it is possible for that communication to be ethical. It will illustrate that communication can be managed ethically; achieving effective communication which creates balanced public discourse. It will show that public relations practitioners can 'manage' communication by 'placing' messages in the public domain, and creating and moulding public opinion using communication techniques that are effective and ethical.

The view presented in this thesis differs slightly to that found in other books and journals in that it sees the role of the public relations practitioner within the communication process somewhat differently. This multi-sided view of communication (explored in Chapter Four) shows the public relations practitioner's role as a facilitator within the public domain, stimulating exchanges of information rather than a facilitator acting on behalf of an organisation seeking feedback when the organisation requests it.

Throughout this thesis, the following terms are frequently used. The term 'communication' is used to describe the process of developing, sending and receiving messages. The term 'media' or 'mass media' refers to the collective communication organisations that produce news, information and entertainment for viewers and listeners. This includes newspapers, magazines and all forms of printed matter, radio, television, as well as recorded music, film and advertising industries (Maharey 1990). A 'medium' is an individual organisation, such as a newspaper, that provides a way for communication messages to be broadcast or printed.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROCESS AND MEANINGS OF COMMUNICATION

"The myth of communication suggests that sending a message is the same as communicating a message. In essence, dissemination is confused with communication" (Cutlip et al, 1994, 228).

INTRODUCTION

In examining the topics of persuasive communication and ethics in persuasive communication, it is useful to start by discussing communication and the communication process. Communication models will be used to illustrate the different stages or elements of the communication process. Transmission, functional and process models will be discussed, and their relative impact on the overall communication process identified. These models show how communication, or data, is 'managed' in the process of transmission. The more complex models show how 'noise' or interference can disrupt or alter the message being transmitted.

An alternative approach to understanding communication is the concept of semiotics, which is also examined briefly in this chapter. Semiotics provides a different approach to understanding how communication works; focusing on how the construction of a message and its interpretation produces meaning.

By necessity persuasion involves communication, and for that reason the study of communication processes and models is also relevant to the topic of persuasion. The theory discussed here will enable implications relating to communication and persuasion to be drawn for the construction of the framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication.

MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Two main schools exist in the study of communication (Fiske 1990). The first focuses on the process of transmitting messages, or the act of communicating, and is generally referred to as process models of communication. The second focuses on meanings and the production and exchange of them. This second school is known as semiotics.

Process Models of Communication

Basic transmission models can be defined as ways in which “information, understanding, meanings or thoughts are transferred and modified in the process of communication” (Lewis and Slade 2000, 11). Shannon and Weaver (1949) developed one of the first transmission models in the late 1940s (see Figure 2:1).

The transmission model consists of five elements (1949, 4-6):

- Information source – produces a message or sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiving terminal.
- Transmitter – operates on the message in the same way to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel.
- Channel – the medium used to transmit the signal from transmitter to receiver.
- Receiver – performs the opposite operation of that done by the transmitter effectively reconstructing the message from the signal.
- Destination – person (or thing) for whom the message is intended.

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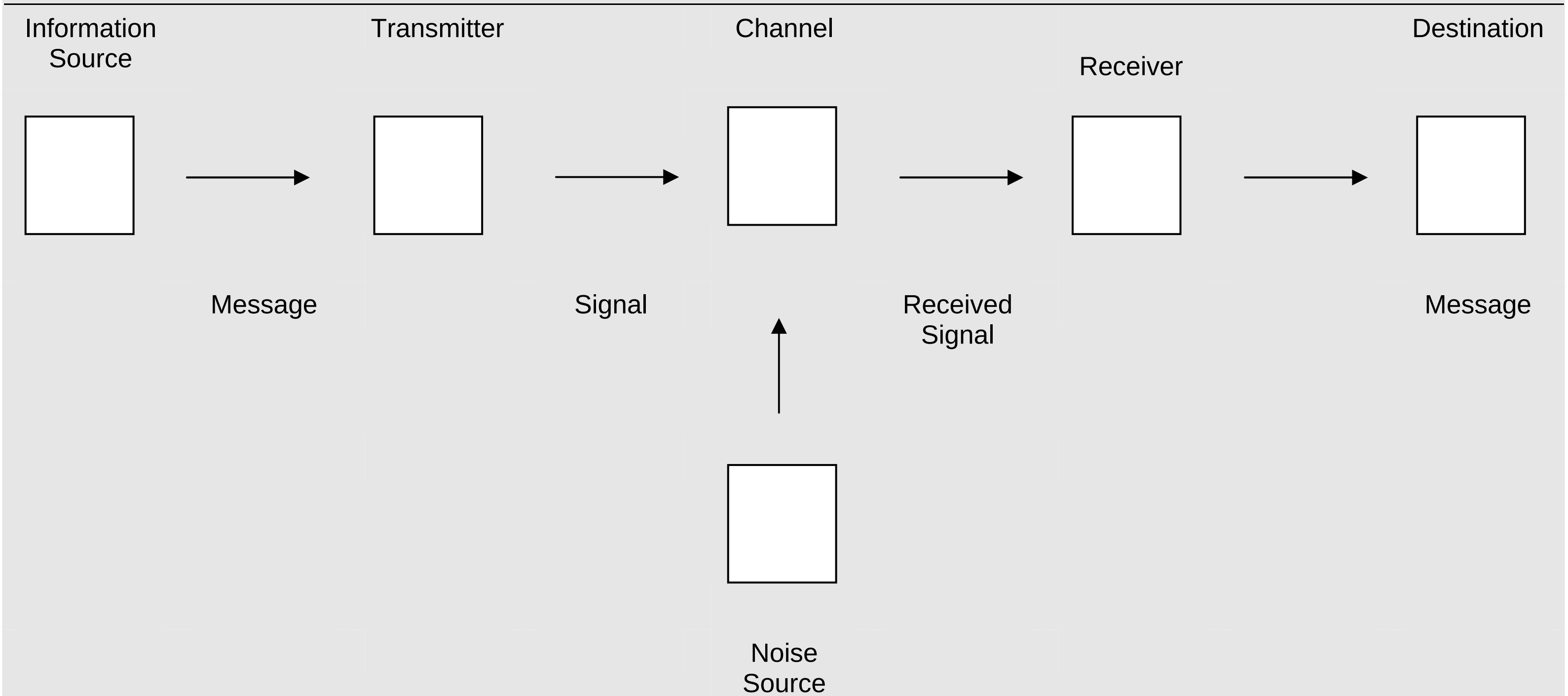
Figure 2:1 Schematic Diagram of a General Communication System
Shannon & Weaver: 1949



Shannon and Weaver were information scientists studying engineering and statistical structures of transmitting messages to achieve communication. In particular, they looked at how accurately symbols of communication can be transmitted (this was seen as a technical problem with transmission); how transmitted symbols convey the desired meaning (this was seen as a semantic problem of how meaning is interpreted by the receiver); and how effectively the received meaning changes conduct in the desired way (this was seen as an effectiveness problem which focuses on whether or not the meaning conveyed to the receiver has led to the desired conduct within the receiver) (1949, 95-97).

Lewis and Slade (2000) described the Shannon-Weaver model as ‘mechanistic’ in that it focused on a process. While the model is accurate, it does not convey the huge array of factors that can influence or interfere with the process of communication. Other versions of the transmission model include ‘codes’, which are systems of signs that the sender and receiver use to encode and decode respectively. Such systems, Lewis and Slade (2000) suggest, allow for the inclusion of complexity or ‘noise’ that can interrupt or distort the flow of information.

Early communication theories tended to focus on transmission models because they reflected and related well to the emerging technologies of the time. However, transmission models evolved to become <u>functional</u> models, which focused on the function of the message rather than just the process of transmission. Most importantly the function of the message represented what effect was trying to be created by the act of communicating. This introduced the idea that the effect created could be different from the effect intended by the sender (Lewis & Slade 2000).

The next step in the development of communication models was to add feedback to the communication process. These <u>process</u> models of communication acknowledge the different results that can occur between sender and receiver. By including a feedback loop, the source receiving a message can interpret the message and then respond by returning a new message. The sender can ascertain how well the message sent has been understood based on the feedback and can then send back further messages in an iterative process until the message is interpreted by the receiver in the way the sender intended. The communication loop then becomes a spiral as the messages loop back and forth as shown below in Figure 2:2.

Figure 2:2 Feedback in Process Models
Lewis & Slade: 2000

Sender = s Hearer [receiver] = h

S's intended message M1 →

S's encoded message M2 →

H's decoded message M3 →

H's perceived message M4 →

H's intended response to M4, R1M4 →

H's encoded response R2M4 →

S's decoded version of H's response R3M4 →

S's perception of H's response R4M4 (feedback)

Semiotics and the Meaning in Communication

Fiske (1990, 3) defined semiotics as an alternative way of viewing communication. This view of communication sees the message as a "construction of signs which, through interacting with the receivers, produce meanings".

"Semiotics sees communication as the generation of meaning in messages – whether by encoder or decoder" (Fiske 1990, 46).

The process of 'reading' the text or message is a 'negotiated' process whereby the receiver brings to the message their own cultural perspectives and ideologies. This can bring about different interpretations of the message, as evidenced through the varying reports of an event in different media throughout the world (Fiske 1990).

Beyond communication as a process, Fiske suggests that communication is the generation of meaning:

“Semiotics sees communication as the generation of meaning in messages – whether by encoder or decoder… Meaning is the result of the dynamic interaction between sign, interpretant, and object: it is historically located and may well change with time” (1990, 46).

This form of communication is made up of “signs, signification, icons, indexes, denotations, and connotations” (1990, 39). These terms refer to the various methods of creating meaning. Models of communication that reflect his semiotic approach to communication are structural and show relationships between different elements.

Both schools of thought (process models and semiotics) in the study of communication provide insight into the process of communication and the ‘management’ of that communication. The following theories provide insight into how communication can be managed or manipulated; introducing the notion that communication may not always be ethical.

COMMUNICATION AS A PERSUASIVE PROCESS

Persuasion is evident in all communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Strong and Cook (1992) state that whether communicators are trying to persuade or just inform, all communication has a persuasive power, and Larson (1998) says persuasion can either be incidental or planned. He comments that even if a message is directed at one person, a second may hear or see the message and be persuaded. An example would be two people having a conversation sitting on a bus and being overheard by a third. In some cases, the sender may not even be trying to persuade the receiver. This suggests that it is near impossible to communicate or present information without persuading, even if it is 'value free' or there is no intent to persuade.

If the process of communication is inherently persuasive, then public relations practitioners as 'managers' of communication are influencing public opinion:

"…those who hold an opinion were somehow persuaded to think as they do" (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000, 185).

Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000, 188) identify three ways to get a desired result from people: "power, patronage and persuasion". Power means using coercion, legal or otherwise, patronage involves either subtle bribery or payment, and persuasion involves using <u>communication</u> to win people over. This they suggest includes six steps:

- Presenting – person must be there – physically accessible and mentally receptive
- Attending – person must pay attention to message
- Comprehending – person must understand message and symbols used
- Yielding – message accepted and agreed with
- Retaining – message must be remembered, so repetition is used
- Acting – behaviour of person must be observed to indicate persuasion has been successful

According to Newsom et al. (2000, 188), the link between the above persuasion model and process communication models indicates that public relations practitioners as managers of communications are in the business of persuading. In particular, the second, third and fourth steps are common characteristics of other communication and persuasion theories, and seem to provide a good starting point for the development of the framework for evaluating ethics in persuasive communication which will be addressed in Chapter Five.

Communication as a managed process and its impact on public opinion is explored more fully in Chapter Four. However, there are a number of important studies undertaken on the different elements of the communication model. These theories propose differing points of view, although they all illustrate the range of factors that can influence the outcome of communication, as well as illustrating ethical considerations at a tactical level.

ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

Figure 2:3 shows key theorists and their studies as they relate to different stages of the communication process. Each stage is described in the following pages with reference to key theories, and the persuasive role they play within the communication process.

Figure 2:3 Elements of the Communication Model
Adapted from Cutlip et al, 1994

THE SENDER	Studies of characteristics of the sender e.g. credibility, attractiveness, and power	
	Hovland and his colleagues	Yale Studies: Sleeper Effect
THE MESSAGE	Studies of message characteristics and how receivers create meaning from messages	
	Hovland and his colleagues	Yale Studies: Order of presentation in arguments; Presenting two sides of an argument; Inoculation theory; Fear arousing messages
	Wiseman and Schenck-Hamlin	Compliance-Gaining Strategies
THE MEDIUM	Studies of mass media vs. interpersonal communication and studies of new communication technologies	
	McLuhan	“the medium is the message”
	Laswell	Media Effects – “all-powerful”, “hypodermic model”
THE RECEIVERS	Studies of audiences and their vulnerability	
	Hovland and his colleagues	Yale Studies: as above
	Lowery and DeFleur	Media Effects: as above
RELATIONSHIP CONTEXT & SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	Studies of the relationship between communicators and the social context within which the communication takes place	
	Rawlins	Communication with friends
	Roloff	Conflict in Communication
	Littlejohn	Nonverbal Communication

THE SENDER

A well-known theory that relates to the ‘Sender’ part of the communication process is Carl Hovland’s sleeper effect studies. His studies looked at how long a change in attitude remained or persisted. Carl Hovland was a pioneer in persuasion research following his experiences of communication. During WWII he became chief psychologist and director of experimental studies for the United States war department. He helped to evaluate the communication of the United States government that had been designed to influence the beliefs and attitudes of allied soldiers (Perloff 1993, Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Hovland, Lumsdaine et al. (1949) predicted that the effect of messages would be greatest directly after communication of the message, and that the changed attitude would remain. However, the surprising result of this study was the birth of what is known as the sleeper effect. Contrary to a lot of early theory that states that the persuasive effect is greater when the message is first received, the sleeper effect argues that the message 'sleeps' until later when it has a greater impact.

Further study elaborated on this theory to include the dissociative-cue hypothesis, which found that even though a source may initially be regarded as untrustworthy and the message has reduced impact on first exposure, it is better learned because it is more critically examined (Tinkham & Weaver 1999). More importantly, over time the source gets forgotten (dissociated) and the effect of the message increases.

Communicator Credibility

Hovland and Weiss (1951 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996) conducted studies about the effect of high and low credibility sources on persuasive messages. They found that a high credibility source was more persuasive than a low credibility one when attitudes are measured directly after the message is received. At this point in time, the source is more important than the message, especially if the message relates to an issue that is of significant interest to the receiver.

Research into communicator credibility usually focuses on two elements – trustworthiness and expertness (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, Petty & Cacioppo 1996). Perloff also identifies (1993, 153) similarity and attractiveness as important elements of communicator credibility. Perloff concludes that the effect of these elements depends on the biases and beliefs of the audience as well as the context of the persuasive situation. However, despite these seemingly important aspects, the sleeper effect has been proven to have more impact on communication than communicator credibility (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 63).

Further research over time found that the negative impacts of a low credibility source faded and the message arguments were eventually remembered more positively. This suggests, from a communicator's perspective, that if immediate behaviour change is desired, consideration should be given to using a high credibility communicator or presenter. For example, advertisers select their 'communicators' – spokespeople or sponsors, with a high degree of scrutiny as they are seeking a change of attitude and behaviour from the receiver as soon as possible. If it is expected that the behaviour change may take time, then the credibility of the communicator may be less of a priority than the message content.

THE MESSAGE

"Plato… regarded persuasion as the key to power and message as the key to persuasion" (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 69).

This belief was based on the notion that it is what is said that has the most impact. Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 69) say that effective messages, according to the message-learning approach, provide incentives for learning and accepting the argument.

Carl Hovland and his associates, Arthur Lumsdaine, Fred Sheffield, and Irving Janis studied a range of factors that related to the message and had a bearing on the persuasiveness of the communication. These studies included the following:

Presenting One or Two Sides of an Argument

Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield (1949, 201) concluded that although there are subtle differences with different types of audiences, it is more effective to present both sides of the argument. They commented that in the interests of 'fairness', it was important and 'right' for receivers to have access to all information before they made their minds up. This also creates a more balanced share of power in the communication process, and is the first step in achieving communication that is ethical as well as persuasive. The importance of this will be highlighted and reiterated in upcoming chapters.

Fear Arousing Messages

Using ‘fear tactics’ in a message is designed to shock people into action. Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 73) state that fear arousing messages are effective in inducing attitude change when the following three conditions are met:

- The message provides strong arguments for the possibility of the recipient suffering some extremely negative consequence;
- the arguments explain that these negative consequences are very likely if the recommendations are not accepted, and
- it provides strong assurances that adoption of the recommendations effectively eliminates these negative consequences.

As Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 72) explain, the promise of relief from a negative event is likely to persuade a person to accept a different point of view or argument.

Researchers suggested that a successful fear-appeal both arouses and then relieves emotional tension. This is done by presenting “new opinions for acceptance” which provide solutions to the problem (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 159). This also reinforces the idea that it is the message itself that arouses fear and not the communicator or their method of communication.

Janis and Fesbach (Janis & Fesbach 1953 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 72) in their studies of fear-appeals found that persuasion attempts using minimal amounts of fear-appeal are the most persuasive, and that medium or high amounts of fear cause interference. This means an individual becomes unable to focus on the intended message or becomes aggressive towards the sender and rejects the proposed arguments (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 162).

Drawing Conclusions

Drawing conclusions when communicating helps the receiver to understand and remember a message. Occasionally, however, an issue is sufficiently engaging that people are able and motivated to correctly summarise the contents and draw a conclusion from a message themselves. Studies show that when this happens, people are more persuaded or maintain their attitudes for longer (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 76).

However McGuire (1998) points out that it can be difficult to assess whether receivers are sufficiently intelligent or motivated to draw the conclusion for themselves. The risk is that the receiver, if not capable, may miss the point of the message to a serious extent unless the source draws their attention to it.

Conclusion drawing may be more effective for communicators when communicating to a large audience, especially if their cognitive ability is not known or clear.

Repetition

According to the message-learning approach, Petty and Cacioppo (1996) state that repetition as used by advertisers, for example, should increase the attention to, comprehension and retention of a message. However, too much repetition can stimulate a negative response and encourage ‘counter argumentation’ (1996, 239).

THE MEDIUM

Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) say that the medium (sometimes referred to as the channel) used for communicating conveys information that is either factual or emotional (2000, 201). The choice of which medium to use can have a significant effect on the persuasiveness of the communication, as each medium has its own unique characteristics.

Typically, studies conclude that face-to-face communication is the most persuasive channel (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 85). However, Strong and Cook (1992) discuss the various effects that different mediums have on the same message, concluding that audiovisual (this would include face-to-face because there is someone to see and hear) is normally the most effective, although complex messages may be more suited to written mediums of communication, where the receiver has more control over the time and effort they can give to comprehending the message.

The most important consideration when discussing medium is that of mass communication and the mass media. Davis and Baran (1981) identify mass communication as one of the most potent forms of communication. Mass communication – communication that is transmitted to a large or 'mass' audience - uses the mass media as a medium for the transmission of messages. Davis and Baran maintain that the way the mass media is used has changed the way we use other communication mediums, especially given the range of new interactive technology that is available such as the Internet, which allow for far greater participative communication. It has also been demonstrated (discussed below) that the mass media have a very persuasive effect. Petty and Cacioppo (1996) describe the potential of an effective mass media campaign as "unquestionably substantial" (1996, 86).

The mass media is such a compelling medium in itself, that a significant amount of research is undertaken to try and establish its effects. This includes analysis of the constraints within which the media operates, the ways in which the media are controlled through ownership, and the media's relationship with the state and other sectors of society. The media have their own ethical issues to consider outside of the communication process in which it operates. However, Davis and Baran conclude that "the mass media are neither inherently good, nor bad" (1981, 11), although theorists typically agree that it is essential to constantly critique and debate media issues.

The key media effect theories that relate to the medium or channel are now discussed briefly below.

Media Effects

The medium component of the communication process became an intense focus for a range of studies and commentary by Marshall McLuhan, Shearon Lowery, Melvin DeFleur, and Frederic Wertham. Marshall McLuhan is remembered for his emphatic statement "the medium is the message", claiming that the media are "all-powerful" (Cutlip, Centre & Broom 1994, Berry 1971). They looked at the power of the media to create as much, or more, impact than the message itself. However, the validity of these media effect studies referred to as the "hypodermic needle model" or "magic bullet theory" have since been superseded by indirect influence theories (Rogers 1983).

The hypodermic needle model suggested that the mass media has "direct, immediate, and powerful effects on a mass audience" (Rogers 1983, 272). Developed by Harold Lasswell, the hypodermic model used Freudian theory to explain how propaganda was created in World War I, why it was so effective, and how it could be counteracted. Lasswell described how non-rational people could be easy targets of political propaganda, and that the use of powerful symbols by "dominant personalities" would incite non-rational urges in them (Davis & Baran 1981, 25-26). Interestingly, at that time compelling figures such as Adolf Hitler, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Benito Mussolini dominated the media.

Many early suppositions about the influence or power of the media were formed before the development of scientific methods of study that enabled conclusions to be drawn from quantitative research findings. Earlier explanations of media theory which claimed that the media had "powerful uniform effects", had to be revised (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 22).

These media effects were referred to as the magic bullet theory whereby, due to urban-industrial populations apparently acting on impulse, sentiment and emotion rather than reason or rationality, these “lonely crowd[s]” were powerless against the media’s messages. These messages, it was suggested, would appeal to emotions and sentiments, and influence the thinking of all individuals in the same way (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 22-23).

But the magic bullet theory reflected thinking of the time. It was developed during WWII, when newspapers, and other media, were used vociferously to convince people that the enemy was bad. Lowery and De Fleur (1983, 23) comment that after the war, many of those who had “engineered the deceptions” were upset by the role they had played in creating false beliefs. This led to a concerted effort to educate people about the danger of propaganda, reflecting how concerned society was at that time about the media’s supposed powerful and uniform effects.

However, as Lowery and De Fleur (1983, 24) point out, early perceptions of people responding in a uniform way were incorrect. Scientific research indicated, “people were active rather than passive receivers of information”. Psychologists had demonstrated that people have different needs, attitudes, values and other personality variables. This, they argued, caused people to respond or react to messages in different ways, demonstrating “selective influence of learning in society” (1983, 24). As Maharey (1990, 199) explains:

“Our image of the audience must begin with the notion that people are active users of the media... it is not so much a matter of what the media do to people as what people do with the media” (Maharey 1990, 199).

At the same time, theorists were suggesting that the media had less and less effect, success was being achieved, with some difficulty, in demonstrating that the media had long range and indirect influences (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 27). These indirect influence theories included <u>modelling</u> and <u>meaning</u>. Modelling theory suggested that behaviours viewed (or learned) through the media increase the likelihood of that behaviour being “reproduced by the individual in a relevant personal situation”. Theorists suggested that if the new behaviour is useful in coping with the situation, the individual is likely to repeat it and thereby create a habit (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 27).

In a similar way, meaning is created by the media which, using a shared language, label symbols (signifiers of an object or situation). The media have then created a successful link between the label and the “portrayed meaning”. Because language is a critical factor in “shaping perceptions, interpretations, and decisions concerning action”, the media are deemed to have demonstrated “powerful, indirect and long-term effects” through the creation of meaning (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, 29). Lowery and De Fleur claim that it is probably these indirect and long-term effects that demonstrate the extent of the media’s influence.

These media effect studies demonstrate the impact a medium can have on the communication process, and they also enable the influence or impact of the medium to be distinguished from the content of the message and from the sender. These mass media effects are considerably different to the effects of other communication mediums. However, despite the fact that early studies showing the mass media as all powerful were later dismissed, they do still show how public discourse is influenced by the phenomena of the mass media itself.

THE RECEIVER

As theories of mass communication developed, the focus shifted more and more towards the receiver and how they processed messages. These theories, of great interest to communications practitioners, seek to put structure around which cause will create which effect, so that consistent results could be obtained. The Glasgow Media Group (Windschuttle 1988, 270) carried out a range of media based studies to test receiver-based theories, seeking to establish how receivers respond to messages. The study concluded that the news media is not an accurate representation of society; rather it is a “broad but selective interpretation of society, though a mediating ideology”. The Media Group commented that the media make events ‘intelligible’ to receivers by giving them social meanings based on particular interpretations of the nature of society, and that the receivers ‘occupy’ the same society, culture and perspectives of events (1988, 270).

Both Larson (1998) and Strong and Cook (1992) discuss theories that show how an individual will change their behaviour. Larson (1998) maintains that the focus of study has broadened to include the internal motives of an audience, their sense of identification, and an identifiable process of persuasion that enables self-persuasion.

Similarly, Sherif and Sherif (1967) believed that analysis of communication effects must begin with the receiver and an understanding of their beliefs and biases. This broadened the scope of message effect theories, which stipulated that the communications process itself would change attitudes and encourage receivers to remember a message.

Other key concepts in terms of how individuals receive and process messages are <u>intelligence</u>, <u>judgemental approaches</u>, and <u>variable perspective theories</u>:

Intelligence

Early studies on intelligence suggested that the more educated a person was, the more they would pay attention, understand and remember arguments within a message, and that this would lead to attitude change (Hovland, 1949). However, later studies showed that people with high intelligence are less persuadable than those with normal or low intelligence (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 80).

McGuire (1968) looked at reception and yield, focusing on how the receiver processed the message and how easily the receiver accepted the message’s argument. Eagly and Warren (1976) demonstrated that there was a correlation between intelligence and persuasibility. They found that intelligence increased acceptance of complex messages and that yield was less important because “it is assumed that everyone would yield to a complex (cogent) argument if they could only understand it” (McGuire 1968 and Eagly & Warren 1976 in Petty & Cacioppo

1996, 82); whereas intelligence decreases acceptance of a simple message, because a simple message suggests that yield is more important.

This theory reinforces the notion that it is important for communication practitioners to find out as much as possible about their audience in order to develop an appropriate message for the intellectual ability of the audience. Similarly, good communicators will find out what sort of values and beliefs an audience has so that they have a better chance of relating to the audience and persuading them.

Indeed, Hovland, Janis and Kelley's work in the 1960s proved that the effectiveness of persuasive communication is reliant on tailoring the message for the audience and understanding how they will respond in so far as specific factors may influence the communication process, for example communicator and context (Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1963, 15). Lowery and DeFleur (1983) also carried out a range of mass communication studies that looked at how susceptible receivers were to messages. The results proved that receivers act differently according to their self-esteem, their position within a group, and their level of ego-involvement in an issue. Ego-involvement occurs when an individual has personal interest in an issue, it has personal significance or they have a strong commitment to a position. The more ego-involved a person is, the more likely they are to reject a persuasive argument (O'Keefe 1990).

Focusing more on the receiver's attitudes and beliefs, as well as how the receiver processes messages, produced <u>judgemental theories</u> and <u>variable perspective theories</u> that provided a comprehensive methodology for predicting the response or behaviour of receivers.

Judgmental Approaches

Perloff (1993, 200) describes judgement theory as people comparing the advocated position with their initial attitude and then determining whether they should accept that position.

Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 122) point out that judgmental processes are important for understanding attitudes and persuasion. They say that how a person judges the position of an incoming message is a crucial determinant of the nature and amount of attitude change that results; and that previous attitudinal positions to which the person has been exposed are "unique determinants of the individual's reference scale and the attitude positions that anchor it".

Judgmental theories are based on an early theory called adaptation level theory, whereby we adapt to a stimulus, and successive stimuli are judged and contrasted based on our new adaptation level (Petty & Cacioppo 1996). However, the most significant judgment theory to contribute to the understanding of persuasion is social judgment theory. This theory identified a new approach to attitudes, arguing that attitudes are not one position, but rather a dynamic range or latitude of acceptance, rejection and non-commitment.

Early studies showed that the more extreme a position was held, the larger the latitude of acceptance or rejection would be (Perloff 1993). This is referred to as communication discrepancy (Petty & Cacioppo 1996). It was found that individuals with large latitudes of acceptance would change their attitudes more than individuals with average or small latitudes of acceptance.

Sherif and Sherif (1967) also identified two other factors that reflected the importance of concentrating on the receiver part of the communication process. The first factor was assimilation, and the second contrast effects. These are perceptual biases whereby a judgment is assimilated towards a personal reference point or contrasted further away from that point, based on the individual's own attitudes. Communication that falls in the latitude of acceptance is assimilated, and those that fall in the latitude of rejection are contrasted. This process serves to further bias the communication, as the individual is already starting to process the message from a biased reference point rather than objectively as Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1963) suggest in their message effect theories.

Credibility of the source has been proven to have an important role in social judgment theory. For instance, a high credibility source can sometimes induce a change in attitude beyond the individual's latitude of acceptance or rejection. Another factor that has been shown to have a significant impact is the ego-involvement of the individual in an issue. When an individual has firmly held views on an issue, their latitude of acceptance is narrow and their latitude of rejection is high. They are most likely to reject any messages that stray even a small amount from their own point of view. Generally, a person will have a high amount of ego-involvement with an issue that has a direct, personal or significant effect on their lives (Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Petty and Cacioppo (1996) conclude that a weakness of social judgement theory comes from its inability to identify how and why the process of assimilation and contrast affect attitude change. It also fails to recognise that these processes precede attitude change.

Variable Perspective Theory

In the late 1960s, Upshaw and Ostrom developed the variable perspective approach that distinguishes between the content of an attitude and the judgmental language a person uses to describe his or her attitude (Petty & Cacioppo 1996). Content refers to ideas, beliefs, images and other elements associated with the attitude object or issues. The rating of an attitude refers to how a person presents their position in an evaluative sense. The relationship between the two is described as a person's perspective.

Despite the significant amount of work that went into these theories, as each successive theorist tried to recreate the studies of their predecessors and to test new theories, it was found that the same results could not always be achieved. This demonstrated that with different audiences in different settings, and with different content, the same uniform results could not be guaranteed (Petty & Cacioppo 1984, Lowery & De Fleur 1983).

It became more obvious that many factors could ‘mediate’ the impact of messages on receivers, rather than being able to attribute just one independent variable to an effect (Cutlip et al 1994). This, once again, reinforces the notion that communication effects on different audiences can be different all the time, and communications practitioners need to research and evaluate their audiences carefully.

Botan and Soto (1998) in their semiotic approach to the internal functioning of publics, similarly concluded that analysing and understanding the receiver is more important or significant in the communication process than other variables such as message content:

“…we argue [that] publics should be accorded the pre-eminent position when studying or practicing any form of strategic communication, including public relations” (1).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSUASIVE ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

This chapter has described both the process of communication and semiotics. It has looked at early communication models and more sophisticated modern ones. The different components of the process – sender, message, medium, and receiver have been discussed, and relevant theories introduced. In doing so, the impact created by each component of the communication process has been demonstrated. While some of the theories discussed may have disproved or been at odds with opposing or preceding theories, they have all highlighted how public opinion can be influenced through the process of communication.

Important themes that can be drawn from the literature are:

Communication Is A Persuasive Process

Communication theory acknowledges that communication is persuasive (Strong and Cook 1992; Larson 1998). Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) argue that the use of persuasive communication involves six steps: presenting, attending, comprehending, yielding, retaining and acting. Of these, attending, comprehending and yielding are of direct relevance for evaluating ethical persuasive communication. Attending (or attention) and comprehension are the first two important steps to creating effective communication. Gaining the attention of the receiver is essential for communicating; and ensuring that the information communicated is comprehensible is fundamental to the receiver understanding the communication. Without these, the persuasive communication has little chance of succeeding. Yielding to, or accepting, the proposal suggests that the communication has in fact been persuasive, and a change of state or behaviour has occurred as a result.

Communication Creates Influence And An Ethical Dimension

The discussion of communication processes and semiotics explains how meaning is created in communication (Shannon and Weaver 1949; Lewis and Slade 2000; Fiske 1990). The models discussed show how public opinion is created and influenced through the persuasive process of communication. Given that a public relations practitioner can manage communication for example, we can start to see how public relations influences public discourse in the public domain. The inherent presence of influence in managed communication indicates that there is the potential for either ethical or unethical behaviour.

Analysing The Audience Is Essential For Effective Communication

Communication studies about the receiver's role in the communication process indicate the importance of identifying and researching the target audience in order to make decisions about managing the communication process (Sherif and Sherif 1967; Strong and Cook 1992; Larson 1998). Important factors include the beliefs and biases of the receiver (Sherif & Sherif 1967), their internal motives (Larson 1998), their intelligence (McGuire 1968; Eagly & Warren 1976; Sherif & Sherif 1967), and preconceived ideas and attitudes (Perloff 1993).

Analysis of the audience (receiver or receivers) informs decisions to be made regarding source, message and medium (Klapper 1960). Communicators need to consider what messages should be communicated, and how those messages or arguments should be constructed or presented. For example, whether to use fear arousing messages, whether to use repetition and draw conclusions for the receiver, and whether to present both sides of the argument. Studies suggest that presenting two sides of an argument is both the most effective and the most ethical way of communicating (Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield 1949).

The next step is to consider who will present or communicate the message and what impact is being sought – an immediate change in behaviour, or is it likely that the message will be attended to and debated for some time leading to behaviour change in the long term. In this case the credibility of the presenter/communicator is less important (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Weaver & Tinkham 1999 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Finally, the communicator needs to consider which medium to use to communicate the message. While many studies argued that the medium was the message, this was disproved and current thought suggests that the most important aspect of the medium, is the choice of medium according to what will be best accepted and accessed by the receiver. This recognises the different influence that each medium can add to the communication process. For example, Strong and Cook (1992) point out that face-to-face communication (including audiovisual) is the most effective communications medium, although complex messages may be more effective in written mediums. The communicator must ensure that the message is produced to suit the medium that is being used (Klapper 1960).

CHAPTER THREE: PERSUASION AND COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Having examined communication in Chapter Two, the next step in evaluating ethics in persuasive communication is to look at the concept of persuasion. As identified in the preceding chapter, all communication is persuasive; therefore it is relevant to consider some of the key persuasion theories. These theories demonstrate how individuals or groups can be influenced, and demonstrate how public opinion can be created, maintained or changed through the communication/persuasion process.

In this chapter the concept of persuasion will be explored. The theories and findings are of interest to a wide variety of communication disciplines, including public relations. This exploration will begin with defining persuasion. The key theories in persuasion research will then be summarised. Finally, implications for the evaluation of ethics in persuasive communication will be drawn.

PERSUASION DEFINED

"… the term persuasion…. refer[s] to any instance in which an active attempt is made to change a person's mind…. " (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 4).

Perloff (1993, vii) identifies persuasion as one of the oldest fields of academic study. Early studies of persuasion focused on the sources of messages and the persuader's skill in the art of speech making (Larson 1998). The philosophers Plato and Aristotle could be considered the earliest theorists of communication and its role in society. Plato developed a theory of rhetoric, while Aristotle's work made a significant contribution to early understanding of persuasion. Aristotle proposed three key components to persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos referred to a source's credibility, pathos to the emotional appeals that could be made, and logos to the logical appeals of an argument (Larson 1998, Perloff 1993).

Popular opinion suggests that persuasion is about mind control techniques and brainwashing. However, persuasion is in fact a complicated mix of techniques, strategies, and mental manoeuvres (Perloff 1993, 4). Most contemporary theorists agree that persuasion is a process whereby a communicator tries to change a person's attitudes or beliefs by sending a message which the receiver has free choice whether to accept or reject (Perloff 1993, Larson 1998, O'Keefe 1990).

Mulholland (1994, xv) points out that persuasion is typically associated with the "misuse of powerful tactics and the exerting of improper influence over others", and because this is seen as manipulation, it is considered unethical. This suggests that it is how the communication is managed that determines whether the communication is ethical or not.

In defining persuasion, and examining the definitions of other theorists, Perloff (1993, 14-16) and O'Keefe (1990) identify the following characteristics of persuasion:

1. Activity or process – an interactive process of sending and receiving messages between the source and receiver.
2. Attempt to induce a change – presence of a desire of the source to influence the receiver.
3. Change in beliefs, attitudes or behaviours – all persuasion is fundamentally self-persuasion.
4. Transmission of a message – the persuasion process must include the sending of a verbal or non-verbal message.
5. Free choice – the individual must have freedom to accept or reject the proposition.

This confirms that the persuasive process is a process of communication that changes the beliefs or behaviours of a person while the person has freedom to accept or reject the persuasive proposition. The freedom to accept or reject the proposal demonstrates ethical behaviour.

While Aristotle's tenets of ethos, pathos and logos remain important components of persuasion, other elements have become increasingly important to understanding the effect or impact of persuasive communication. For example, Larson (1998) looks at the internal motives of an audience, the sense of identification that can be created, and finally the process of persuasion itself. These factors, Larson says, enable "self-persuasion" which is a fundamental requirement for persuading somebody to change his or her point of view. Strong and Cook (1992, 10) comment, "one can only persuade a person to persuade himself". They suggest that persuasion is a cooperative process, which requires that both parties in the communication process are willing participants. Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000, 196) describe self-persuasion as the strongest and most effective type of persuasion, which communicators should encourage.

In addition to the receiver having to experience free choice whether to accept or reject the proposal, public relations practitioners also need to manage persuasive communication in an ethical way. This requires careful consideration of the content and reasons for their messages, but also the way in which they communicate those messages. Codes of ethics developed by the industry suggest what is or is not ethical behaviour. A more thorough exploration of ethical behaviour will be undertaken in Chapter Four.

From a review of existing literature, it seems that it is possible to communicate ethically, with the purpose of changing a person's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, through the use of persuasion. With this in mind, a more detailed examination of persuasion theories follows.

The definitions identify persuasion as an ethical process and suggest that public relations needs to be ethical in order to be considered ‘persuasive’ rather than ‘manipulative’ or ‘coercive’.

PERSUASION RESEARCH

A significant advancement in the study of areas such as persuasion occurred when social scientific research techniques were developed, allowing for a disciplined and replicable methodology for testing hypotheses and formulating theories (Perloff 1993, Davis & Baran 1981). Such studies produced the following theories of persuasion, based on a sociocultural paradigm, which attempts to account for variables that enable an individual to interpret or present reality, such as in the mass media (Newsom et al. 2000, 200).

Rather than any one factor being responsible for a change in behaviour, all share some responsibility depending on the context or event. This suggests that there are multiple factors influencing the effectiveness and ethics of persuasive communication. Figure 3:1 below summarises six key areas of persuasion study that relate to communication managed by communication practitioners. Each area is discussed in the following pages, identifying key theorists and factors that are of significance to each stage within the communication process as outlined in Chapter One.

Figure 3:1 Key Areas of Persuasion Research

Message Learning Theory	**Studies based on the 'learning' of the message content within the communication process**	
	Hovland and his colleagues	Yale Studies: Sleeper Effect
	Skinner	Skinnerian Behaviourism
Conditioning and Modelling Theory	**Studies based on the 'conditioning' or 'modelling' experienced by an individual over time**	
	Petty & Cacioppo	Rudimentary Learning, Associative Learning
	Pavlov	Pavlov's Dog Experiments
Motivation Theory	**Studies based on the desire or motivation of an individual to match their attitudes and beliefs to another person's**	
	Maslow	Hierarchy of Needs
	Heider	Balance Theory
	Osgood & Tannembaum	Congruity Theory
	Festinger	Cognitive Dissonance Theory
Self-Persuasion Theory	**Studies that focus on the internal process of persuasion that an individual goes through when receiving and analysing communication messages**	
	Tesser	Mere Thought
	Janis & King	Role Playing
Attributional Theory	**Studies that focus on the process of ascribing or attributing attitudes to an individual based on their external behaviour**	
	Freedman & Fraser	Foot in the Door
	Lepper, Greene & Nisbett	Overjustification Effects
Combinatory Approaches	**Studies that focus on how an individual uses and 'combines' information with other factors to create an attitude**	
	Fishbein & Ajzen	Reasoned Action Theory
	Rokeach	Belief Hierarchy
	McGuire	Probabilogical Theory
	Anderson	Information Integration Theory

Message Learning Theory

Message learning theory focuses on how the receiver learns and processes the information within a communication message. The effort expended learning the information in effect persuades the receiver, ultimately leading to attitude and behaviour change. Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 93) state that the message learning approach occurs because incentives are provided within the persuasive message that suggest why the recommended position should be adopted. This leads to attitude change, which is achieved by 'learning'. Petty and Cacioppo describe this attitude change as "a relatively stable change in behaviour that results from prior experiences" (1996, 40).

Carl Hovland and his Yale University colleagues used the question "who says what to whom with what effect?" to focus their research into the role of message learning in persuasion (Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1963). These pivotal studies examined how different variables e.g. source, message, recipient, and channel, affect a person's attention, comprehension, yield to the message, and retention of the persuasive arguments. Hovland and his colleagues proposed the message-learning model to explain attitude change during the 1940s and 1950s. They claimed that learning the verbal content of the message was the primary determinant of attitude change, although the idea of rewards offered within the message was fundamental to their analysis (Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

In 1957, BF Skinner, a behavioural scientist, developed a schedule of reinforcement referred to as 'Skinnerian Behaviourism'. This theory, based on the features of learning theory described above, looks at five basic schedules of reinforcement: continuous, fixed-interval, random-interval, fixed-ratio, and random-ratio. Skinner's schedule of reinforcement is of particular use in advertising and political campaigns because it sheds light on how people react to different intervals of communication delivery (Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

According to the message-learning approach, factors relating to the sender, such as communicator credibility, intent to persuade, communicator attractiveness, communicator similarity and communicator power, influence the likelihood of people listening to, understanding, yielding to, and retaining the recommendation made in the persuasive message (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 68).

Conditioning And Modelling Theories

Feelings and reactions are based on previously conditioned responses. Dramatic examples of conditioning are cults, which are examples of persuasion by learning principles. These principles are widely practiced in society today through advertising, church sermons and propaganda, political and social campaigns, classroom discourses, and even family interactions (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 39).

Petty and Cacioppo explain conditioning and modelling approaches as ways to change a person's attitude based on rudimentary learning. Learning is achieved by associating an attitude or object with other stimuli such as food or an electric shock, which already produce positive or negative responses. Ivan Pavlov's dog-feeding studies demonstrated how dogs could be conditioned to want food at the sound of a bell ringing (Malone 1991). This associative form of learning is called classical conditioning. A second form of associative learning is operative conditioning, which is based upon the supposition that people act to maximise the positive, and minimise the negative, consequences of their behaviour (Skinner 1938, Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Instrumental conditioning can be defined as directly rewarding or punishing a person for expressing certain attitudes. When certain attitudes are expressed by one person and viewed by another, observational learning occurs. As Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 51) described it, people learn which responses are rewarded and which are not by observing rather than directly experiencing.

Various classical conditioning describes situations when both classical and observational principles are used. Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 54) explain that the emotional response on the part of one person acts as a stimulus and is capable of eliciting a response in the form of a similar emotional reaction in an observer.

Motivation Theory

Motivational theories show how changes in attitude can be influenced by strong motivational forces (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 160). These forces act on the beliefs of people, and so these theories focus on the balance of one person's beliefs against another person's. As Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 160) explain:

"The need or desire to maintain cognitive consistency, or what people consider to be "logical" consistency among their beliefs (i.e. psycho-logic), is addressed by balance and congruity theories of attitude change".

The idea behind consistency theories is to maintain cognitive consistency. Both balance and congruity theories include common elements pertaining to the equilibrium or disequilibrium in cognitive elements, the motivation people have to restore consistency when faced with disequilibrium, and the processes that enable equilibrium to be restored (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 126).

The most basic form of motivation theory that people experience everyday is expressed in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Abraham Maslow, a social scientist, developed a simple model depicting an individual's hierarchy of needs. These needs are the underpinning drivers to people's beliefs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow stated that as each need is met, an individual is motivated to fulfil their higher level needs Maslow (1970 in Rudman 2000).

Figure 3:2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Source: Rudman 2000, 359

Higher order needs	**Self-actualisation needs**	Desire for growth, development and self-fulfilment and the urge to realise one's potential
	Esteem needs	The desire for self-worth, independence and achievement, and for the recognition and respect of others
	Belonging and affection needs	The desire to relate to other people and to give and accept love, care and co-operation
Lower order needs	**Security or safety needs**	Needs for physical and emotional security, including shelter, clothing and means of self-defence
	Physiological needs	Basic needs for food, water and sleep

This theory had a significant influence on the application of motivation theory within the context of organisational and management practices, although it has been subsequently shown that this model has more levels than people usually operate at.

Rudman (2000) cites Clayton Alderfer (1969) who further developed Maslow's theory. His Existence, Relatedness and Growth Theory (ERG theory) identified three groups of needs:

1. Existence needs - to meet material and physiological requirements;
2. Relatedness needs - for social contacts and friendship through families, co-workers, work groups, and people and groups outside of work;

3. Growth needs - to use skills and abilities for creative and productive purposes, as well as to develop the individual's potential as fully as possible

(Rudman 2000, 360).

In contrast to Maslow's hierarchy, the ERG model does not require one set of needs to be met before moving to a higher level. In fact, Alderfer argued that a person whose needs in one area are not being met might be able to satisfy themselves by compensating with some lower level need. In addition, desires to satisfy needs at all levels could be providing motivation for a particular person (Rudman 2000, 360). Understanding these needs, at whichever level, gives an insight into how people's motivation can be stimulated through the careful construction of persuasive messages that target individual needs.

However many writers now say there are just two categories of needs: "lower and higher order needs" (shown in the left hand column of Figure 3:2 (Rudman 2000, 360)).

Balance Theory

Balance theory, developed by Heider in the late 1940s and 1950s, focuses on the balance that is sought when a person's cognitive elements are unbalanced. It is based on attitudes and beliefs within a relationship. Heider expressed his balance theory using dyads (two elements) and triads (three elements) to show consistency, or lack of, between elements. Heider concludes, "balance is a preferred and stable set of elements within a system, and… that balance exists in the person's mind rather than in objective fact" (Heider in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 133). Heider's dyads and triads were represented as triangular models to describe agreement and disagreement in interpersonal relationships.

Congruity Theory

Osgood and Tannenbaum's theory of congruity looked to develop more fully the degree of liking or belongingness that could not be identified in Heider's balance theory, as well as making it possible to assess the likelihood of change (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 133). It focuses on the source and a concept, and the assertion made by the source about the concept. Congruity theory identifies the degree to which pressures motivate a person to restore congruity by changing their attitudes positively towards the source and/or the concept. However, if a person feels more strongly about one element, that element will change less than the other.

Congruity theory uses advanced formulas to assess like or dislike, and the likelihood of change. It is frequently used in political campaigns and advertising. It predicts that the attitude least strongly held will move the most, and that those attitudes held strongly will be virtually impossible to influence (Strong & Cook 1992, 49).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Of more significance than either balance or congruity theory is that of cognitive dissonance theory, developed by Leon Festinger in 1957. Festinger introduced the idea of consistency, inconsistency, and irrelevancy between cognitive elements (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 137). Inconsistency between elements creates dissonance, resulting from logical inconsistency or from behaviour that is in contradiction with your self-control. This theory describes what people do when they act inconsistently with their own beliefs as a result of pressures from power, patronage or persuasion (Newsom et al. 2000, 198).

A key feature of Festinger's cognitive dissonance is its ability to motivate behaviour. He claimed that cognitive dissonance would give rise to activity oriented toward reducing or eliminating the dissonance (Festinger 1957 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 138).

Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 140) suggest four ways to reduce cognitive dissonance:

1. Alter the behaviour to conform to attitude
2. Alter attitude to conform to behaviour
3. Alter both to feel more comfortable in a middle position
4. Rationalisation – seek positive information and support for action, avoiding negative information

Dissonance is required before people are motivated to change. Persuasion (and persuasive communication) forces an audience to re-examine their beliefs and values – and to revisit the dissonance that first caused them to make a decision (Strong & Cook 1992). Creating dissonance and motivating change in people's beliefs, attitudes and eventually behaviour requires an understanding of what motivates people in the first place.

Self-Persuasion Theory

Self-persuasion ultimately occurs when we internalise thought, without external stimulus. Under these conditions, we may generate ideas or information that were not considered when an attitude was first formed. Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 213-221) define self-persuasion as the product of thinking about an issue, which causes attitudes to become more extreme, or polarized. For example, an event that annoys a person may on reflection cause an even stronger reaction or opinion. This form of persuasion is deemed highly effective, because a person develops their own arguments to support their view.

Self-persuasion is a central requirement of effective persuasion, and therefore many studies have looked at the importance of a person's own thoughts in inhibiting and facilitating attitude changes. However, while self-persuasion is a "potent" form of persuasion, it is reliant on other aspects of persuasion theory playing a role in the process of changing attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 251-252).

Mere Thought

Similar to self-persuasion, and probably a contributing factor of self-persuasion, is the notion of "mere thought". Tesser (1978 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996) conducted studies into mere thought. These studies tested the notion of schema, which enable our beliefs to develop and change, and more often to polarised extremes. The more a person thinks about an issue, the more comprehensive their understanding of that issue becomes, and the more intense their beliefs and attitudes become.

Role Playing

Janis and King (in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 216) looked at role-playing viewpoints or different arguments. They found that the participative process of role-playing different viewpoints or arguments increases an individual's self-persuasion. Role-playing is recognised as an effective technique in changing attitudes on a wide variety of issues, and in producing long lasting attitude change. These effects occur because people are engaged in the process and required to rehearse biased information. They value more highly the arguments they develop themselves, and are therefore better able to remember the key points.

Attributional Theory

Attribution theory suggests that it is possible to identify a person's attitudes and intentions based on their behaviour. It also suggests that attitude change partly depends on the 'attributions' people make about other people's behaviour and about their own (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 163). The attributional approach to attitudes and persuasion characterises people as active problem-solvers and focuses on changes in attitudes that result from reasoned (though not necessarily logical) inferences.

Several studies (Freedman & Fraser 1966; De Jong 1979; Uranowitz 1975 all in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 168) were conducted on 'foot-in-the-door' techniques that looked at the behaviour of people who are encouraged minimally to act in a certain way, and then faced with a second opportunity to act in a similar way. The studies showed that most people were likely to act the same way as they had the first time, even if the behaviours were somewhat uncharacteristic.

Further attributional studies looked at the effect of rewards on behaviour, and the "undermining of favourable attitudes" due to too much external justification for attitude-consonant behaviour (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 169). This was called the Overjustification effect. The rewards can also undermine an individual's liking of a task, especially if the rewards are dependent on achieving a certain level of performance or involve a level of surveillance. However, verbal-praise rewards that positively acknowledge an individual's competence increase a person's attitude towards a task.

In contrast to Festinger's view that a person's internal discomfort with dissonant cognitions causes them to rationalise their behaviour, Bem (1967) argued that people reason why their attitude must be the way it is for them to have behaved in a certain way (Bem 1967 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 171). Fazio, Zanna, and Coopers' (1977) own studies concluded that if an individual chooses an unacceptable position, it leads to attitude change because of the arousal of cognitive dissonance; whereas choosing to support an acceptable position leads to attitude change by self-perception (Fazio et al. 1977 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 173).

Combinatory Approaches

The combinatory approach to persuasion focuses on the role of information in changing people's attitudes and on how people combine the information they receive into an overall impression (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 177).

Combinatory approach theories look at how information is combined or integrated to form an impression or attitude about a person, object or issue. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), and Rokeach (in Larson 1998) looked at information that is based on direct personal experience. They called this primitive belief, or descriptive belief. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1996, 183) these beliefs make up a person's basic beliefs of the world, and are very difficult to change. Inferential beliefs go a step further than beliefs based on experience, and occur when people make assumptions that elaborate on their primitive or descriptive beliefs. People are also able to develop beliefs based on what they are told by others. These are called informational beliefs.

Rokeach's Belief Hierarchy (see Figure 3:3) shows five levels of beliefs. These beliefs, predicted Rokeach, feed our attitudes which in turn feed our values (Larson 1998).

Figure 3:3 Rokeach's Belief Hierarchy
Adapted from Larson 1998

Beliefs → Attitudes → Values

Five levels of beliefs:

- Primitive beliefs (unanimous consensus)
- Primitive beliefs (zero consensus)
- Authority beliefs
- Derived beliefs
- Inconsequential beliefs

Three key theories exemplify the combinatory approach. These are probabilogical theory, reasoned action theory and information integration theory.

Reasoned Action Theory

In the late 1970s Fishbein and Ajzen developed reasoned action theory, which argues that the relationship between beliefs, attitudes and behaviours can be expressed mathematically, assuming that humans are rational and systematic (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 193). This relationship is expressed as a weighted sum of information a person has about an attitude object. A person's behaviours are based on their own attitude and perceptions of other people.

This theory identifies that the best predictor of behaviour, is the behavioural intention regarding that behaviour. This can be predicted by assessing a person's attitudes toward a behaviour, and a person's 'subjective norm' (behaviour that the person feels socially acceptable acting out) (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 193).

Probabilogical Theory

In the early 1980s McGuire developed probabilogical theory. This theory looks at how a change in a person's individual belief, can lead to inferential changes in other beliefs. McGuire (1998) identified two types of change that occur in belief systems:

1. Socratic effect whereby the belief structure becomes more logically consistent the more people express their beliefs, and
2. Spatial and temporal inertia, which look at how far different arguments are from each other or how long they take to have effect.

"These belief changes were shown to be governed by both logical and "wishful" thought processes" (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 211).

Information Integration Theory

Anderson (1971) developed information integration theory, or cognitive algebra, in the early 1980s. This theory suggests, "much of human judgement and decision, including attitude judgment, obeys simple algebraic models" (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, 204). Anderson looked at 'weighted averaging models', as well as <u>multiplicative</u> and <u>additive</u> models. Anderson's theory suggested that attitude judgments are determined by several beliefs based on memory or external sources. However, Petty and Cacioppo argue there is very little compelling evidence to accept this theory.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSUASIVE ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

The persuasion theories discussed in this chapter illustrate how persuasion occurs through the process of communication. All of the theories discussed demonstrated the inter-connectedness of persuasion and communication; and the discussion of persuasion in this chapter has highlighted the importance of ethical behaviour – freedom to accept or reject a proposal – in order to distinguish persuasion from other manipulative or coercive forms of communication. This is the most important feature of persuasive ethical communication.

Persuasion By Definition Is Ethical – And Includes The Notion Of Freedom Of Choice

Based on the definition of persuasion adopted at the start of this chapter, the process of communication must be ethical or it ceases to be persuasive and becomes coercive or manipulative in nature. Definitions of persuasion identify that for persuasive communication to be ethical, the receiver must have freedom to accept or reject the proposal (Perloff 1993, O'Keefe 1990 and Larson 1998). This notion of freedom of choice becomes central to the concept of persuasion when evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication.

Other key aspects of ethical behaviour in persuasive communication relate to the communication process itself and the requirement to act ethically while communicating. In public relations, codes of ethics provide guides as to what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour for a public relations practitioner.

The Aim Of Managed Communication Is To Effect Self-Persuasion

Message-learning theory (Hovland, Janis & King 1963, Skinner 1938) describes how appropriate messages are created for the audience to interpret and understand. Conditioning and modelling theory (Petty & Cacioppo 1996, Malone 1991), motivation (Maslow 1970 in Rudman 2000), as well as attributional and combinatory approaches (Freedman & Fraser 1966, de Jong 1979 & Uranowitz 1975 all in Petty & Cacioppo 1996) cover the development of beliefs and attitudes, behaviour change, and the motivating factors that influence a change in beliefs and attitudes that are a necessary precursor to a change in behaviour. They provide insight into the cognitive processes that a person goes through when being persuaded. Together these theories show how managed communication leads ultimately to self-persuasion, which is claimed to be the most effective form of persuasion, and ultimately the way in which all changes of state occur (Tesser 1978 and Janis & King in Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Persuasion Requires A Proposal (A Communication Message) Aimed At Achieving A Change Of State

A proposal (or communication message) should state the argument or rationale for the receiver adopting that viewpoint. If this is not clear, the communication will not succeed in being persuasive. Message-learning theory, conditioning and modelling theory describe the ways in which proposals or arguments can be learned and adopted by the receiver (Hovland et al. 1963; Skinner 1938).

A change of state occurs when the persuasive communication addresses the beliefs, attitudes or behaviours of the receiver and provides a reason for the receiver to change them (Perloff 1993; O’Keefe 1990). Motivational, self-persuasion, attributional and combinatory theory all seek to explain how a person’s beliefs, attitudes or behaviours might be changed.

CHAPTER FOUR: MANAGED COMMUNICATION AND ETHICS

Disciplines that focus on managing communication aim to change the opinions, values and behaviors of an identified target audience. Effective managed communication will influence the climate of public opinion to a lesser or greater degree, depending on the scope and scale of communication activities. This is the aim of managed communication activities.

Public relations is one form of managed communication. It seeks to manage entire communication processes, with the aim of influencing public opinion and discourse:

"Public relations practitioners are involved in the maintenance and transformation of discourse primarily through the production and distribution of texts[1]" (Motion & Leitch 1996, 299).

Differing views of public relations exist. Some theorists see the role and influence of public relations on discourse as positive, presenting information to be considered by the receiver, while others are more critical. Critics accuse the public relations industry of 'engineering consent' (Stauber and Rampton 1995). More specifically, Mayhew (1997) describes the public relations practitioner's role in the following way:

"PR professionals are not responsible for balanced, objective presentations, or even for scrupulous avoidance of misleading implications, for their role is advocacy before the "court" of public opinion… it is up to the other side to present its own truths" (Mayhew 1997, 203).

This debate is central to the issue of ethics in managed communication, and in particular public relations. Comrie (2002, 167) suggests that most of the debate around ethics in public relations focuses on this issue of advocacy on behalf of the client. This thesis suggests that 'leaving it up to the other side' is not the most

[1] Motion & Leitch draw on Fairclough's description of texts as spoken or written artefacts that are discursive in nature.

ethical way to communicate. In fact the creation of a forum for debate will be shown as the most important responsibility of the public relations practitioner. This concept will be explored in more detail below.

This chapter will explore public relations as a form of managed communication. It will examine public relations theory, and look at the concepts of public opinion and public discourse. The impact of public relations on public opinion and discourse will be examined, and the ethical issues associated with this impact drawn out. The question of why ethics are important in public relations will also be addressed.

This will enable implications for evaluating ethics in persuasive communication to be identified. This, alongside the implications identified in Chapters Two and Three, will provide the final building blocks for a model for evaluating the ethical application of managed communication.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS MANAGED COMMUNICATION

Public relations practitioners can be found working in many fields such as public diplomacy; litigation public relations; public health promotions; development public relations; social causes; support of particular candidates or political policies; to gain acceptance for corporations or industry's apologies; public policy views; products; and employee directed campaigns (Botan 1997, 2).

Definitions of public relations have evolved substantially, reflecting the significant shifts in the practice of public relations (Hutton 1999). One of the most famous founders of American public relations, Edward Bernays[2], emphatically described that function:

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[2] Edward Bernays, the nephew of Sigmund Freud, was born in 1891 in Vienna. He was surrounded and inspired by his family's ideas and power of thought. In the early 1900s he became one of America's most influential public relations practitioners and an "architect" of modern propaganda techniques. He was part of the First World War committee for public information, and took on the role of "selling" the war to the American public. Bernays also studied and educated political leaders on the use of mass persuasion, mass media, and the use of visual imagery - coining the term "engineering of consent" (Ewen 1996). His work and substantial writings are remembered not only for their intrinsic values, but also for the fact that they were an inspiration to Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's Nazi propaganda minister in the Second World War. Bernays turned down a

"Public Relations means exactly what it says, relations of an organization, individual, idea, whatever, with the publics on which it is dependent for its existence" (Bernays 1986, 35).

While early public relations was essentially a one-way flow of information from the organisation to the public, Bernays' pragmatic view of public relations recognised the practice as a social science, whereby a practitioner provided counsel to management on the views of the public to win their support (Interview with Edward Bernays 1990 in Ewen 1996, 11).

Bernays felt that the persuasion and manipulation of the masses "a general public that is essentially, and unreflectively, reactive" was essential. He claimed that they did not have the requisite faculties to make decisions about society or government business - an opinion that could still be heard today among many practitioners and organisations alike (Ewen 1996, 10).

Peart and Macnamara's (1991, 11) definition is similar to Bernays in its simplicity, although it acknowledges more broadly the impact of public relations by saying that "PR is the relations between a group and its publics". This definition recognises the important fact that public relations between any organisation and its publics exists whether it is planned or not, and whether public relations tactics have been employed or not.

Tymson and Sherman (1990) explain the above idea by saying that in a modern democracy, every organisation from the government to the local shop, survives only by public consent, and that the consent of the public cannot exist in a communications vacuum. Therefore it is necessary to use public relations to enable a flow of communication between organisations and their publics.

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request to provide public relations assistance to Hitler in 1933 before his rise to power, although Bernays was later told by a Hearst newspaper correspondent, that during an interview with Goebbels the correspondent had seen a copy of Bernays' 1923 book, *Propaganda*, on the minister's desk (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000). His first book *Crystallising Public Opinion*, published in 1923, was the first full-length book dealing with public relations (Black and Sharpe 1983, 177).

Modern practitioners of public relations like to see their role as a 'management function' whereby they manage the perceptions that publics have of an organisation, and also the perceptions the organisation has of its publics. Cutlip, Centre and Broome (1994) integrate this management function in the following definition:

"Public Relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip et al. 1994, 6).

The purpose of this management function is to create a relationship that adds value to both parties (Cutlip et al. 1994; Tymson & Sherman 1990; Seitel 1992). Definitions of public relations have necessarily changed as the practice itself has evolved and become more professional. Early forms of public relations focused on 'informing' or telling people things. Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (2000) describe three different views of public relations that reflect the evolution that has occurred in Figure 4:1 below.

Figure 4:1 One-Way Flow to Two-Way Flow of Relationship Building Communication

Adapted from Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000

Stage 1	One-way flow from organisation to publics. Controlled by organisation.	**Controlling publics** – by telling people what to think or do to meet the needs of an organisation
Stage 2	Two-way flow between organisation and publics. Controlled by organisation.	**Responding to publics** – reacting to problems or issues that arise
Stage 3	Two-way flow between organisation and publics. Initiated by either party with purpose of achieving mutual objectives.	**Achieving mutually beneficial relationships** – developing and maintaining dialogue with various publics or stakeholders that an organisation has

Stage three represents Stephen Greyser's <u>transactional model</u> of public relations, while stages one and two represent his <u>manipulative model</u>, and <u>service model</u> respectively (Newsom et al. 2000). As public relations has developed into this transactional model, the notion of social responsibility has become increasingly important, suggesting that the first two stages lack a focus on the environment and society within which an organisation operates.

While it can be argued that the progression towards a relationship-building model of communication merely serves the purpose of enabling an organisation to pursue its goals more easily, it is a more ethical paradigm (Botan 1997; Kent & Taylor 2002).

Botan (1997) describes public relations as strategic communication, which:

"…invariably uses research to identify a problem or issues, relevant publics, and measurable goals and objectives… A strategic plan then adopts steps, or strategies, addressing that problem with target publics and employs a series of measurable tactics through which to implement those strategies." (1).

The skill of a public relations practitioner enables them to be a problem finder, solver and preventer. In fact, practitioners sometimes explain their worth as a measure of <u>not</u> how effectively they can communicate a message, but whether a crisis or issue can be avoided (Newsom et al. 2000).

Hutton (1999) has reviewed public relations definitions through history, theory and practice, and has produced his own succinct definition based on a three dimensional framework. His definition – simply "managing strategic relationships" - he argues, straddles both theory and practice targeting the core purpose of public relations – relationships. This definition is useful in that it recognises that the actions of either party can influence the success of the relationship. This suggests that if a relationship context is applied to the practice of public relations, a more ethical approach is likely to be taken by the public relations practitioner.

While for many the question of what public relations is remains unclear, most people are aware of how large the industry has grown. Many despise it, although it has become a part of every day life:

“Public Relations has become enormously important in a world linked by technological marvels…[it] has evolved from a fringe function to a basic element of society” (Seitel 1992, 2).

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS THEORY

The development of public relations theory was born out of the study of mass communication and public opinion as well as the study of language, semantics and rhetoric. These are predominantly sociological and psychological fields of study from which the communication disciplines have ‘borrowed’ theory to explore and understand how people develop attitudes and beliefs, and what influences their behavior.

Many recent advances in public relations theory have been proposed by American academic, James Grunig and others working on projects relating to his core research areas of public relations theory. Grunig (1992) in his four models of public relations, describes the various ways in which public relations is commonly practised today and characterises the behaviour of public relations practitioners. In doing so, Grunig identifies a model that typifies excellence in public relations. The four models are: press agentry/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical; and two-way symmetrical.

As part of these four models, Grunig developed the terms ‘asymmetrical’ and ‘symmetrical’ to describe the purpose of public relations as striving for balanced rather than unbalanced communication and effects:

“Asymmetrical communication is imbalanced; it leaves the organization as is and tries to change the public. Symmetrical communication is balanced; it adjusts the relationship between the organization and public” (Grunig: 1992: 289).

The development of the four models interestingly reflects the historical development of public relations itself. Grunig identifies the press agents of the mid-19th century, as the “first full-time specialists to practice public relations”. Grunig called this type of public relations the ‘press agentry/publicity model’, made famous by P.T. Barnum's promotion of circus performers. Practitioners of this model of public relations sought to "help the organization control the publics that affect it" (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000, 18).

In the 20th century, as a reaction to growing attack from reporters, big organisations and government departments hired their own journalists to write "press handouts" containing positive things that were mostly truthful and accurate. This was the beginning of the '<u>public information model</u>'. The early work of Ivy Lee, as an ex-business and banking reporter, is an example of this model of public relations. His strength was seen as interpreting complicated and misunderstood facts and presenting them simply to the general populace (Grunig 1992).

Both these models are one-way models of communication, with information flowing from the organisation to the public usually through the popular mass media of newspapers, television, radio and magazines.

Around the time of World War I, Edward Bernays, who had a personal interest in psychology, began applying social science research and theories to his own public relations work in order to learn about audiences before preparing and communicating messages back to the audience. Typified by exchanges of information with the public, this two-way flow of communication is an example of Grunig's '<u>two-way asymmetrical model</u>'. Asymmetrical in that Bernays studies of propaganda, persuasion and the "engineering of consent", demonstrated that humans could be manipulated for both good and bad reasons.

Bernays' focus on the analysis of public opinion, and the provision of advice to senior management in order to enable the organisation to best represent itself to the public, is probably typical of a great deal of the public relations that still occurs today (Bernays 1986). This model is seen as two-way as it seeks input or an exchange of information between the sender and the receiver, however it is asymmetrical rather than symmetrical because the feedback is used, more often than not, to help identify better methods and messages for manipulating stakeholders.

Grunig says that “the asymmetrical worldview steers public relations practitioners toward actions that are unethical, socially irresponsible, and ineffective… practitioners with an asymmetrical worldview presuppose that the organisation knows best and that publics benefit from ‘cooperating’ with it” (Grunig 1992, 40). This approach to public relations could become limited in its effectiveness as it creates problems for developing and maintaining sustainable long-term relationships with stakeholders.

Grunig’s ‘two-way symmetrical’ model differs from the two-way asymmetrical model in that research is used not to identify messages that will motivate or persuade a change in behaviour of the audience, but “to facilitate understanding and communication… understanding is the principal objective of public relations rather than persuasion” (Grunig 1992, 289). “With the symmetrical model, both the organisation and publics can be persuaded; both also may change their behaviour” (Grunig 1992, 39). Grunig suggests, “the two-way symmetrical model provides a normative theory of how public relations should be practiced to be ethical and effective” (Grunig 1992, 285).

While Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model provides good rationale for striving for ethical and effective public relations, Anne Gregory, in an address to the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (2002), points out that these models may seem idealistic, especially given the large number of stakeholders an organisation may have. This, she says, can create resource problems. However, the underlying premise of Grunig’s models is that public relations should be practiced with the public interest in mind.

Gregory herself proposes two paradigms of public relations practice – firstly a ‘systems view’, and secondly a ‘rhetorical’ (or persuasion view). The systems view is based on a traditional business view of open systems theory. Related to the public relations context, Gregory says it explains how organisations interact with the external and internal worlds, and “how those interactions are managed”. At the boundary, she says, the public relations practitioner represents both the organisation to the external environment, and the external environment to the organisation. Gregory cites Grunig's four models of public relations practice as the best examples of a systems view.

The rhetorical or persuasion view holds that the principal role of a practitioner is to "persuade the publics of an organisation to a particular view", and that "having put forward a persuasive argument it is then up to others to challenge that" (Gregory, 2002). The ensuing process of dialogue will then lead to an agreed meaning or way forward. This approach is supported widely by public relations practitioners, and Allan (2001) says, "It is your personal ethical decision to make".

This approach, argues Gregory, reflects the rhetorical tradition of ancient Greece. It takes the view - "we are fully entitled to put forward a partisan view and to argue that unashamedly. Giving other people the dignity of debate is the height of respect and democracy". In essence the broader process itself delivers ethical outcomes, rather than the practitioner considering the inherent ethics of their discrete actions. However Gregory cautions that:

"The awkward caveat for us as public relations practitioners is that those who propose an opposing view should do so as equals: equal in power, in access and in setting the agenda" (Gregory 2002).

However, the threat of unbalanced resources and skills in such a debate is significant and likely to cause resentment of public relations practitioners and undermine the value of public relations, thereby reducing the positive impact public relations can have on public discourse. In this scenario, public relations is neither effective nor ethical in the long term.

So while definitions and theories of public relations will continue to evolve, the notion of what is ethical and effective for public relations over the long term emerges as a fundamental consideration. This is a key theme and question for this thesis.

The remainder of this chapter therefore, will look at the role of public relations in society, focusing specifically on how public relations can be practised with the public's interest in mind. In order to do this, the impact of public relations as a shaper of public opinion will be explored, and the notion of ethics as it applies to this role will be discussed briefly.

PUBLIC OPINION AND DISCOURSE

As Petty and Cacioppo (1983, 3) put it, "from the moment you awake, somebody is trying to change your mind about something". They explain that we live in a fast paced 'information age' and are exposed to a milieu of persuasive messages each day. Public opinion is moulded by these messages, which are disseminated through the media and opinion leaders. Public relations practitioners are responsible for creating and sending many of these messages, and they work increasingly hard at sending these messages as the public become more skilled at 'decoding' and interpreting them.

An excellent example of the power public relations has to influence public opinion, is the role of the 'four minute men' during the Second World War (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000; Ewen 1996):

"Virgil Williams, a local bank manager, was one of 75,000 small businessmen, lawyers and other professionals who would get up at local community events and speak for around four minutes on "the holiness of the American war effort" and to "condemn the heresy of antiwar opinion". These 'Four-Minute Men' would speak nearly 150,000 times a week, forming only one part of America's biggest publicity campaign yet" (Ewen 1996, 104).

Maharey (1990, 192) explains that in modern societies, the role of the media has become increasingly important due to the fragmented way in which people live their lives. He points out, "people within their narrow, fragmented lives have knowledge of an enormous array of events because of the media". It is the information that is printed and broadcast in the media that creates public opinion, so it can be seen how producing and placing information within the media creates a significant responsibility for public relations practitioners.

Higgins believes that we are moving towards unaccountable markets as a substitute for public policy, representing a drift away from democracy. In this worldview, people become consumers rather than active participants in a public world. Higgins argues that the broadcasting industry, and more broadly it could be argued the communications industry, has become the platform for this transition. A transition to a commodified and entertainment preoccupied forum, rather than one that seeks debate and is a source of differing ideas and viewpoints (1999, 1). These factors decrease demand, interest and appreciation of traditional communication channels, which enable public discourse. This, Higgins says, sees us drifting into unfreedom and existence as consumers rather than citizens (1999, 3).

Gregory (2002) argues that public relations practitioners have the responsibility of managing information and making sense of it. This 'interpretation' role, she suggests, is a "frighteningly large task and responsibility". Implemented with a lack of ethical behaviour, public relations practitioners and their work have the capacity, Mayhew argues (1997, 5), to be "fraudulent and pervert the course of public discourse".

Despite, its mixed reputation, Gregory says that public relations has had a "civilising and edifying impact on our world". She suggests that it has had an emancipating and empowering effect by giving voice and power to those who do not have it, and that it has put important issues on the public agenda. Furthermore, Gregory describes the role of public relations practitioners as moral agents in society, providing opportunities for dialogue:

"…breaking down barriers, offering opportunities for and facilitating mediation between conflicting interests. Dialogue helps to create understanding and aids conflict resolution: it helps break down prejudice, misunderstanding and fear of the unknown" (Gregory 2002).

Burton St John (1998, 34) shows just how effective public relations can be at creating public opinion, commenting on how public relations affected the population and development of new American communities alongside the westward expansion of the railroads in America. It was at this time, he says, that the term public relations came into common usage. Early press agentry tools such as books, articles in newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, posters and advertisements were used to influence public opinion and encourage settlement alongside the developing railroads. St John says legislators were also influenced by the railroad public relations. So much so that rather than scrutinise the railroads, many legislators were quick to accommodate the industry so as not to leave their own town or districts in ‘unrailroaded wasteland’ (St John 1998, 37).

In summarising public relations history and development, St John suggests that the current daily reliance on technological developments such as the television, computer and telephone, which move people away from community interaction, can be moved back to a two-way interactive model. St John argues that public relations, with its firm grounding in communication approaches, is well positioned to take an active step in facilitating the two-way flow of communication within a community, creating a healthier social structure (1998, 39). This means public relations should continue to have a role in stimulating public debate and providing information for public discourse, but in a way that benefits everybody in the community.

Advertising director Bill Bernbach of DDB (Doyle Dane Bernbach) Worldwide Communications Group, once said “The world has progressed to the point where its most powerful force is public opinion”. He suggested that it was not literature and the arts that would shape public opinion, but rather those who understood the mass media and the techniques of persuasion (Danzig 1999, 36).

The way in which the public inform themselves could be said to be dramatically different today. However, the role of the media and associated professional communicators has always been a key component in the formation of public opinion. Early public relations practitioner Edward Bernays said, “…we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons… who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind" (Bernays 1986, 9). He felt that the 'engineering of consent' – the freedom to persuade and suggest was the very essence of the democratic process (Bernays 1947 in Ewen 1996, xiv).

However as time has moved forward, commentators have noted the influence exerted over the public by the media:

"In Public Opinion, Walter Lippman (1922) wrote that the public no longer formed its own opinions… instead, people's opinion like their knowledge, were fed to them by the media in the form of slogans and stereotypes" (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000, 44).

Maharey (1990) says that the media construct the understanding people have by providing interpretation of events:

"…the media select what people learn. An agenda of issues and concerns is established through such mechanisms as news broadcasts and the subject matter of entertainment programmes" (1990, 192).

Critical views have been expressed by the likes of Mayhew (1997) and Chomsky (Achbar 1982). Mayhew argues that the rationalisation of public persuasion and the domination of professional communicators erodes the social organisation of public opinion (1997, ix), suggesting that the public's ability to persuade the persuader is limited.

So while the role of the media and professional communicators is clearly seen as a significant factor in the creation of public opinion, the degree of the public's comfort with this role is limited. It would seem that most do not view that the media and professional communicators such as public relations practitioners have the public's best interests at heart (Chomsky in Achbar 1982; Stauber & Rampton 1995; Ewen 1996; Hager & Burton 1999).

Bivins (1993) argues that public relations practitioners have a responsibility to stimulate balanced debate over issues. However the ethics of just what public relations practitioners do to stimulate that debate is constantly questioned. It is less common today for public relations practitioners to feel that they have a right to 'engineer consent' for the greater good of society, and Peart and Macnamara (1991) suggest that seeking consensus through two-way communication is what practitioners should be aiming for:

"In a democracy, consensus is the basis of political and social decision-making. Communication is how we build consensus" (Peart & Macnamara 1991, 2).

Those who manage the communication process create public discourse. Public relations therefore, has a key role in creating public discourse and public opinion.

Motion and Leitch (1996, 297) demonstrated this link using discourse–centred social theory to reflect public relations as a strategic role that places texts (communication messages) into the public arena, where "discursive struggles" occur over "sociocultural practices". This role suggests that public relations practitioners manage the communication content and flow in public discourse:

"Public relations practitioners are involved in the maintenance and transformation of discourse primarily through the production and distribution of texts" (Motion & Leitch 1996, 299).

According to Motion and Leitch, critical discourse analysis has become a prominent theoretical perspective in social science research, which has not been readily considered by public relations scholars (1996, 297). Therefore, using Fairclough's model of <u>critical discourse analysis</u>, and Moffitt's ideas on <u>articulation</u> and <u>overdetermination</u>, Motion and Leitch add these concepts to the worldviews of public relations offered by Grunig (1992).

Their analysis shows that public relations practitioners provide <u>texts</u> (communication messages) for public discourse to maintain or transform behaviour by 'articulating' images that seek to dominate over other images an individual may have. This is called ‘overdetermination’. When assessed against Grunig’s symmetrical and asymmetrical approach to public relations, his findings show that these practices are often asymmetrical. Fairclough and Moffitt’s ideas, combined with Grunig’s, provide a valuable framework for dissecting the managed communication process of public relations (Motion & Leitch 1996).

So while Motion and Leitch’s work shows how public relations impacts on public discourse, it seems that this impact may not be positive as the public relations practices were asymmetrical. This suggests that in the long-term public relations may becomes less effective at influencing public opinion as asymmetrical public relations lack credibility and ethics.

The phenomenon of mass communication through the mass media plays an integral role in the impact public relations has on public discourse. Davis and Baran (1981) identify mass communication as one of the most potent forms of communication. However, it is the development and placement of messages in the media that determines what impact on public discourse will be created – the process of managing communication itself.

It is because of the impact that the role a public relations practitioner can have on public discourse, that this thesis has been written, and the Communication Persuasion Ethics Model (CPE Model) of evaluating the effectiveness and ethics of public relations proposed. It is hoped that this model will provide guidance for the practice of public relations in the public’s interest, and that it will encourage persuasive communication that is effective and ethical.

The following section discusses why ethics is so important to public relations and argues that it is possible, if not essential, for public relations to be ethical.

WHY ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IS IMPORTANT

Botan (1997) states, "…the social relationships that campaigns seek to create, maintain or change produce the core ethical issues of public relations…" (2). He goes on to suggest that in the new information age, the reach and impact of public relations campaigns can be expected to grow, and the ethical questions raised to become broader and more urgent.

"In practice, many current practitioners do not want to lie, but they do not do all of their work in the open, they do attempt to persuade rather than merely inform, and they do believe that only a fool speaks frankly about matters which could injure a client" (Olasky 1986, 147).

Despite this revealing quote, as has been discussed in Chapter Three, most argue that it is possible to communicate persuasively and ethically (Larson 1998, O'Keefe 1990). Larson (1998) says, "responsible receivers can be rationally and ethically persuaded" if three things occur:

1. Both sides have equal chance to persuade
2. A revelation of agendas (being open and honest)
3. Presence of critical receivers

However, while this is theoretically possible, ethical behaviour is frequently compromised by the context within which managed communication occurs. Mayhew (1997, 14) comments that lack of public discourse is compounded by practitioners' lack of time, money and skills. He discusses the idea of "economics of information" which is brought about by the limits of time and other cost factors, whereby people tend to readily accept "bounded rationality" rather than pursuing full rationality. Mayhew says people seek shortcuts and low-cost alternatives that will hopefully achieve the same results as if they spent more time, money and effort. This, he says, "establishes fertile ground for the weak discourse of the New Public[3]" (1997, 14).

The media creates time and space constraints that reduce the opportunity for transparent dialogue. In fact Bivins citing Lasch (1990) argues that the media has "abdicated its role of a proper forum for debate" because it provides just information rather than stimulating public debate (1993, 204). Baker and Martinson (2002) argue that public relations practitioners will play a dysfunctional societal role as professional persuasive communicators if they do not use established ethical principles to guide their communication practices; and Motion and Leitch (1996, 308) suggest that given a public relations practitioner's role in 'discursive struggles', it is relevant for them to consider the ethical implications of that role.

Ethics in public relations operates at two levels (Bivins 1993). Firstly, the ethical behaviour or actions of the practitioner. These aspects are generally well covered in codes of practice, for example, misinformation or dissemination of misleading information, profiteering from inside information, and observing privacy rights of clients and employers (Bovet 1993; Public Relations Institute of New Zealand 2004). These Leeper (1996, 145) would argue are examples of situational ethics, and currently the predominant approach to public relations. A second level of ethics lies in the responsibility of the profession of public relations.

However, Kruckeberg (2000) and Parkinson (2001) identify shortcomings in the first level approach, and in particular, public relations codes of ethics. Kruckeberg suggests codes of ethic and conduct are too prescriptive and based at an individual practitioner's tactical level. He proposes the notion of 'strategic ethics', suggesting that a practitioner must think strategically about the ethical ramifications of actions on their organisation and for their profession. This goes some way towards Bivins' concept of professional obligation to serve the public interest, which is the second level of ethics that exists in the practice of public relations

[3] Mayhew defines today's disparate and in-cohesive society as the New Public, which is dominated by professional communication specialists and their techniques (1997: 5).

itself. This level of ethics would be more similar to what Leeper (1996) describes as discourse ethics theory, based on the work of Habermas.

Bivins (1993, 117) claims that if public relations is to become recognised as a credible profession within our society, then it is essential to clarify its ethical obligation to serve the public interest. For example, the fostering of balanced public debate and the provision of avenues for even unpopular causes to be heard. This, Bivins suggests, is difficult to achieve given the question of “how a practitioner can, while serving a discrete interest, also serve society” (1993, 117).

Fry (1992) argues that the ethics of public relations practice tends to be governed by the practitioner’s responsibility to top management, the organisation and him/herself, and that balancing the demands of internal and external publics creates ethical challenges.

Bivins (1993) suggests that the public interest can be served if codes of practice are altered to include a responsibility of the profession (rather that the individual public relations practitioner) to improve the quality of debate over issues important to the public, as this will serve the public interest and ultimately demonstrate the ethics of the profession. For example, Bivins suggests that:

“A member [of the profession] shall endeavour to serve the public interest through encouraging debate on issues of interest to the public; and where possible offering representation when both sides of such issues are not adequately represented so as to foster informed public debate” (Bivins 1993, 128).

This Bivins suggests, establishes a two-way communication process designed to present each side of an issue, which would greatly enhance the image of public relations as a contributor to the democratic process (1993).

Striving for better ethical performance in the public relations industry would require loyalty to a common set of guidelines. McElreath (1999) compares the public relations practitioner’s professional role to that of doctors or lawyers, pointing out that these respective professions show allegiance to the justice system or to the medical fraternity rather than to their immediate employer or other influencing agents.

LIMITATIONS OF TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION MODELS

In public relations theory, the notion of both sides having equal opportunity to communicate and persuade is consistent with James Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of communication (Grunig 1992). However, Mayhew (1997, 203) argues that the ideal of two-way communication has never been "fully institutionalised" at least to the degree in which both directions of communication have equal importance.

Mayhew says public relations experts "are employed to affect public opinion on behalf of the interest of their employers, not to be independent brokers of the public interest" (1997, 203). Despite public relations practitioners frequently implementing communications campaigns that can be defined as two-way (either asymmetrical or symmetrical, or what Grunig calls the mixed-motive model), the industry and its practitioners still seem to be accused of failing to provide an ethical service. Bivins (1993) argues that such a paradigm fails to serve the public's interest. Similarly, Botan (1997, 10) discusses how dialogic (two-way) models are "very difficult to operationalize", although not impossible to overcome.

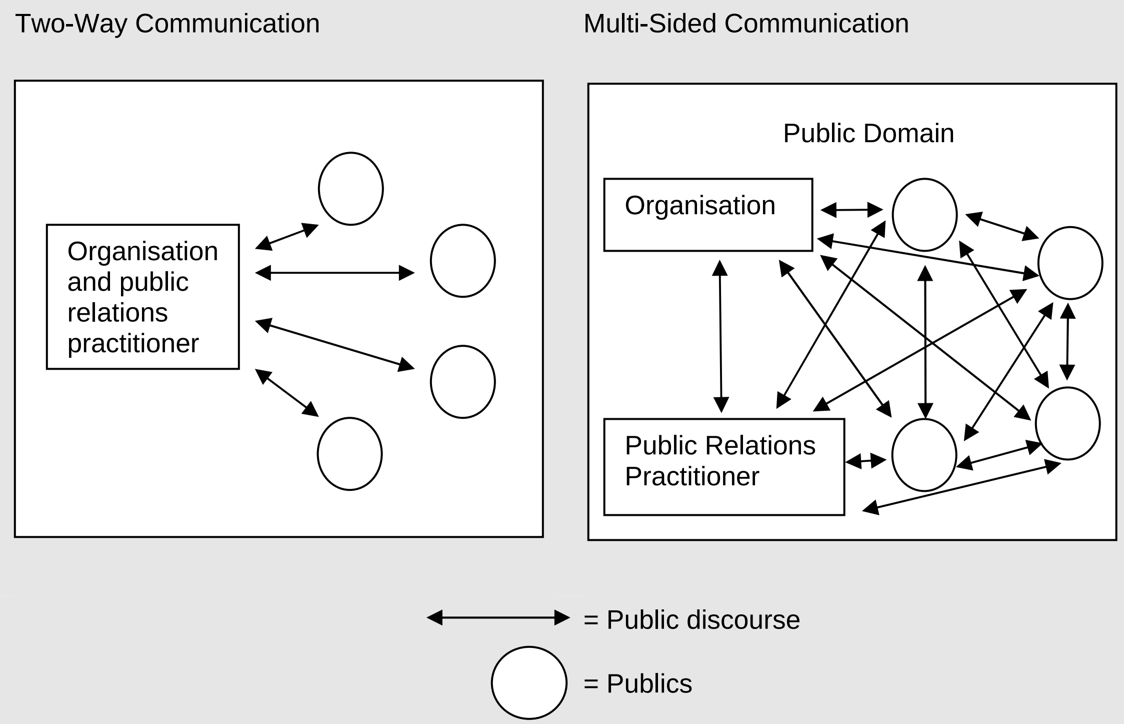
Pearson (in Kent & Taylor 2002, 21) was the first to substantially look at the concept of dialogue as a 'practical public relations strategy'. He said that it was morally right to establish and maintain communication relationships with all publics and consequently immoral not to do so.

The concept of dialogue originated in the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, rhetoric and relational communication; recognizing the importance of communication that is open, genuine and participative for all parties. Kent and Taylor argue that this achieves productive and ethical relationships.

They go on to say that the concept of dialogue as a feature of ethical/moral communication predates the concept of symmetrical communication by decades, and that the shift to a relational approach to public relations theory has seen a need to define more accurately the notion of dialogue. They suggest that for dialogue to be effective, organizations need to be committed and accept the value of relationship building.

However, it is proposed that public relations will develop beyond two-way communication to become ‘multi-sided communication’ (see Figure 4:2), which draws on common tenets of communitarianism (Culbertson & Chen 1997). Two-way communication recognises dialogue or a relationship between a sender who orchestrates or facilitates the exchange on behalf of an organisation with identified target publics who are invited to participate. Multi-sided communication recognises that there is more than one side to an issue, and that different voices with their own agendas should be able to and encouraged to initiate, promote and communicate differing points of view. In this approach, the public relations practitioner may facilitate the dialogue, but is not directly representing any one interest or organisation. This later approach provides a more transparent way for the public’s interests to be met, although it does raise questions as to how this approach would be funded and resourced.

Figure 4:2 Two-Way and Multi-Sided Communication Approaches



IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSUASIVE ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

The definitions and theories of public relations discussed in this chapter trace the development of the industry and illustrate the ethical questions and considerations associated with public relations. These stem from the fact that public relations is able to have a significant impact on public opinion and discourse, and is therefore seen to have ethical obligations in respect of this impact.

Criticism and discussion of public relations in terms of its ethical dimension has been explored above. While debate continues as to whether, and how, public relations might prove itself to be ethical, several of the theories proposed in this chapter show that there is justification for a positive view. The theories put forward by Baker and Martinson (2002) and by Bivins (1993), together with Grunig's two-way symmetrical model shed light on ethical approaches for public relations.

Implications that can be drawn from the preceding theory are:

Ethical Behaviour In Persuasive Communication Requires Accuracy, Truth And Transparency

Existing codes of ethics require a certain standard of ethical behaviour to be followed, such as that laid out by the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (see Appendix One, page 4).

A large number of authors in the field of communication management have outlined a range of ethical guidelines to guide behaviour, such as Baker and Martinson (2002); Olasky (1986); and Riley (1993) all of whom have been quoted in this chapter. While this achieves ethical behaviour, it does not always achieve ethical outcomes. Therefore, codes of ethics could be considered to fall short of encouraging public relations practitioners to be ethical.

Creating And Influencing Public Opinion In An Ethical Manner Requires A Fair And Equitable Forum For Debate – Multi-Sided Communication

In response to the ethical questions asked of public relations, Bivins (1993) suggests that the industry has a responsibility to serve the public interest by ensuring balanced public debate exists. This can only be achieved if all sides of an issue are equally represented. Bivins suggests that this can be done by practitioners putting forward all sides of an issue and encouraging debate, or by ensuring that parties representing differing viewpoints are adequately resourced to be able to put those viewpoints forward with equal voice.

This presents a significant challenge for the industry, given the natural reluctance of most clients (particularly commercial ones) to resource competing viewpoints. However, the theory discussed suggests that ensuring that this ‘forum for debate’ exists is a key principle for assessing the ethics of persuasive communication. Creating a balanced and fair forum for debate means issues can be addressed legitimately and in a way that people can see that all viewpoints of the issue are being presented and explored. It would seem that this would increase the integrity of public debate, encourage more people to be involved in public debate and civic issues, and ultimately lead to better decision-making and a stronger participatory democracy. This discussion of the ‘forum for debate’ also provides a basis for modifying typical two-way communication models to incorporate multi-sided communication interaction, and explicitly identifying the public domain within which that communication interaction occurs.

An Ethical Approach To Persuasive Communication Is Better With Regard To The Overall Effectiveness Of The Public Relations Industry Over The Long-Term.

Taking an ethical approach to persuasive communication, including presenting competing views and being accurate, truthful and transparent, will lead to enhanced credibility for the public relations industry as a whole. This will improve the effectiveness of the industry and the discipline in the long run, because as credibility levels rise, people will have more confidence and faith in the role that public relations plays and the messages practitioners place in the public domain.

CHAPTER FIVE – A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE ETHICS OF PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

The theory discussed in the preceding chapters has provided a number of implications that can be used to develop a qualitative framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication. In this chapter the framework is assembled, with the result being a model that can be used to examine the links between the concepts of communication, persuasion and ethics in public relations campaigns. The model will then be applied to a case study of managed communication and public discourse in the next chapter.

BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

The preceding chapters dealt with three theoretical areas – communication, persuasion, and managed communication and ethics. The concluding arguments from each area are summarised below, and principles for the model defined.

Communication

Communication is the process of sending messages between a sender and a receiver. Its purpose is to transfer meaning between people. There are many aspects to the concept of communication, such as the process of communicating, what effect choice of medium has on communication, and how important the credibility of the source or sender is. There are many theories both academic and popular as to what constitutes effective communication. Stage one of the model presented in this chapter suggests the following principles, based on the theory presented in this thesis:

Communication Is A Persuasive Process

Definitions and theory of both communication and persuasion have indicated that communication is inherently persuasive (Strong and Cook 1992; Larson 1998; Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg 2000; Perloff 1993, O'Keefe 1990). Therefore, the notion of persuasion becomes a defining characteristic of effective communication.

Communication Creates Influence And An Ethical Dimension

Communication models and semiotics theory explain how meaning is created through the process of communication (Shannon & Weaver 1949; Lewis & Slade 2000; Fiske 1990). Communications studies that build in these models and theories discuss the potential for different variables to impact on the overall process, highlighting how public relations, as a managed communication process, can influence public discourse (Perloff 1993; Hovland 1949; Weaver & Tinkham 1999; Lowery & De Fleur 1983; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg 2000; Strong & Cook 1992; St John 1998). This capacity shows how there is the potential for either ethical or unethical behaviour (Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg 2000; Mayhew 1997*;* Larson 1998, O'Keefe 1990).

Analysing the audience is essential for effective communication

From the theories discussed, a conclusion can be drawn that it is essential to analyse the audience in order to achieve effective communication. Choices need to be made by the public relations practitioner at each stage of the communication model (sender, message, medium, receiver) (Klapper 1960). For example, it is necessary to consider the beliefs and biases of the receiver (Sherif & Sherif 1967), their internal motives (Larson 1998), their intelligence (Sherif & Sherif 1967), and preconceived ideas and attitudes (Perloff 1993).

Consideration needs to be given to what messages should be communicated, and how those messages or arguments should be constructed or presented. For example, whether to use fear arousing messages, whether to use repetition and draw conclusions for the receiver, and whether to present both sides of the argument. Studies suggest that presenting two sides of an argument is both the most effective and the most ethical way of communicating (Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield 1949).

Decisions need to be made about who will communicate the message, and what impact is being sought: either an immediate change in behaviour or, is the argument more complex and therefore a longer timeframe allowed for a change in behaviour. When the process takes longer, the credibility of the presenter/communicator is less important (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Weaver & Tinkham 1999 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

The communicator also needs to consider which medium to use to communicate the message - each medium can create quite a different effect. For example, face-to-face communication (including audiovisual) is considered the most effective, although complex messages may be more effective in written mediums (Strong & Cook 1992). The communicator must ensure that the message is produced to suit the medium that is being used (Klapper 1960).

Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) suggest that the key to persuasive communication involves six steps: presenting, attending, comprehending, yielding, retaining and acting. These steps provide a guide to the practitioner as to what they should be seeking to achieve when making decisions about the issues mentioned in the paragraphs above. In particular, attending, comprehending and yielding are considered to be of direct relevance in the evaluation of ethical persuasive communication. Attending or attracting attention and ensuring that the communication is comprehensible to the receiver are essential components to effective communication. Yielding to or accepting the proposal suggests that the communication has in fact been persuasive, and a change of state or behaviour has occurred as a result. This is of more relevance to the second stage of the model that deals with persuasion.

In conclusion, it is proposed that effective communication needs to attract the <u>attention</u> of target audiences, provide information that the target audiences can comprehend, and demonstrate the relevance or impact of the information to the target audiences, and more importantly to the individual. In essence, effective communication should persuade - it should create, alter or confirm a person's beliefs and attitudes.

Therefore, the four components of stage one of the framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication are:

1. Attention
2. Comprehension
3. Relevance (impact)
4. Persuasiveness

Persuasion

Persuasion is a communication process that seeks to create, maintain or change a person's beliefs, attitudes and or behaviour. Persuasion is achieved by using a range of techniques, but is by definition an ethical process. The theories discussed in Chapter Three demonstrate how individuals or groups can be influenced and how public opinion can be created, maintained or changed through the communication/persuasion process. Stage two of the model presented in this chapter suggests the following principles based on the theory presented in this thesis:

Persuasion By Definition Is Ethical – And Includes The Notion Of Freedom Of Choice

Persuasion is defined by theorists as ethical, and this maxim is based on the notion that persuasive communication provides the receiver the freedom to accept or reject the persuasive proposal (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990; Larson 1998). If this freedom of choice is not present or genuine, the process of communication ceases to be persuasive and becomes coercive or manipulative in nature. This notion of freedom of choice is an important element when evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication.

It is also important for the public relations practitioner to operate with ethical behaviour. Identifying characteristics of ethical behaviour are discussed in the next stage of the model, but include concepts such as honesty, identifying whose interests the public relations practitioner is advocating on behalf of, and ensuring that the public relations practitioner's actions do not deceive the public. A large number of authors in the field of communication management have outlined a range of ethical guidelines to guide behaviour (Baker & Martinson 2002; Olasky 1986; Riley 1993); and existing codes of conduct or ethics require a certain standard of ethical behaviour to be followed (Public Relations Institute of New Zealand 2004). While these may, in the most part, achieve ethical behaviour, they do not always achieve ethical outcomes. Therefore, it is concluded that guidelines and codes of ethics fall short of ensuring that public relations practitioners and the work they do are ethical.

The Aim Of Managed Communication Is To Effect Self-Persuasion

Message learning theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1953 and Skinner 1938 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996) describes how the receiver 'processes' and 'learns' communication messages or arguments. This process of learning enables the receiver to interpret and understand the message, and in doing so the receiver is self-persuaded. This is considered the most desirable form of persuasion, as it is the receiver who has changed his or her own opinion rather than the sender who may be perceived as trying to convince the receiver of accepting a particular argument or proposal (Tesser 1978 and Janis & King in Petty & Cacioppo 1996).

Persuasion Requires A Proposal (A Communication Message) Aimed At Achieving A Change Of State

Persuasion theory clearly identifies that persuasive communication needs to include a proposal (or communication message) that should state the argument or rationale for the receiver adopting the proposal. Message-learning theory, conditioning and modelling theory describe the ways in which proposals or arguments can be learned and adopted by the receiver (Hovland et al. 1963; Skinner 1938).

Persuasion theory also identifies that a change of state in a person's beliefs, attitudes or behaviours and a reason for the receiver to change them is required (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990). Conditioning and modelling theory (Petty & Cacioppo 1996; Malone 1991); motivation (Maslow 1964); attributional and combinatory approaches (Freedman & Fraser 1966, de Jong 1979 & Uranowitz 1975 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996) cover the development of beliefs and attitudes, behaviour change, and the motivating factors that influence a change in beliefs and attitudes that are necessary for a change in behaviour to occur.

In conclusion, it is suggested that communication that persuades should propose an argument. This proposal, with its ensuing arguments should cause a change of state by challenging a person's beliefs and attitudes, ultimately leading to a change in behaviour. If these principles are met in managed communication, it is likely that self-persuasion will have occurred – this being the most effective and ethical form of persuasive communication (Larson 1998, Strong & Cook 1992 and Newsom et al. 2000). However, persuasion is typically defined by the freedom of choice the receiver has to accept or reject the proposal. The act of persuading, through communication, should be carried out with ethical behaviour.

Therefore, the four components of stage two of the framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication are:

1. Proposal
2. Freedom of Choice
3. Ethical Behaviour
4. Change of State

Ethics In Managed Communication

There is a long tradition of academic debate around ethics dating back to Aristotle. Ethics is now also debated in an applied sense, in connection with a variety of disciplines and professions. In this thesis, ethics in managed communication, or more specifically public relations has been commented upon. In particular the significant impact public relations can have on public opinion and discourse, and the ensuing ethical obligations in respect of this impact have been considered.

It is continually debated academically and informally by public relations practitioners and spectators as to whether, and how, public relations might prove itself to be ethical. A positive view has been offered in Chapter Four, and is therefore included in the proposed framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication.

Ethical Behaviour in Persuasive Communication Requires Accuracy, Truth and Transparency

Public relations practitioners are expected to present information that is accurate, truthful and transparent. This is a standard indicator of ethical behaviour. This means ensuring that information is not presented in a way that is misleading, obscures the truth, or diverts attention. Discussion in Chapter Four suggests that this does not always occur (Stauber & Rampton 1995; Olasky 1986; Mayhew 1997; Ewen 1996).

Creating and Influencing Public Opinion in an Ethical Manner Requires a Fair and Equitable Forum for Debate – Multi-Sided Communication

It was suggested in Chapter Four that the industry has a responsibility to serve the public interest by ensuring balanced public debate exists (Bivins 1993). This, Bivins argued, could only be achieved if all sides of an issue were equally represented by public relations practitioners putting forward all sides of an issue and encouraging debate, or by ensuring that parties representing differing viewpoints were adequately resourced to put those viewpoints forward. Stimulating and facilitating a forum for debate ensures that balanced public discourse is being created.

Despite the challenge this creates for the public relations industry, given the natural reluctance of most clients (particularly commercial ones) to resource competing viewpoints, ensuring that this 'forum for debate' exists is considered the most important principle for assessing the ethics of persuasive communication. Discussion of this 'forum for debate' raises a need to modify typical two-way communication models in order to reflect explicitly the nature of multi-sided communication interaction that Bivins suggests is necessary, as well as identifying the public domain within which that interaction occurs.

In addition to creating an effective forum for debate, those who wish to participate must be assured of fairness and equality by ensuring people have equal ability, knowledge, understanding and resources to participate in the public dialogue. Once again, if they are not able to, then public relations practitioners need to create an appropriate balance. When this occurs, public relations practitioners are serving the public interest that Bivins (1993) argues is essential in order for public relations to be considered ethical.

An Ethical Approach To Persuasive Communication Is Better In Terms Of The Overall Effectiveness Of The Public Relations Industry Over The Long-Term

Taking an ethical approach to persuasive communication, which includes presenting competing views, and being accurate, truthful and transparent, will lead to better quality public debate. Creating a fair and equitable forum for debate means issues can be investigated legitimately, with all viewpoints being presented and explored. It is considered that this would increase the integrity of public debate and encourage more people to be involved in public debate leading to better decision-making and a stronger participatory democracy.

Facilitating an effective forum for debate, whereby the many sides of an issue are represented fairly and equitably, coupled with ethical behaviour on the part of public relations practitioners, should lead to an improvement in the effectiveness of the industry and the discipline in the long-term. As public relations becomes more effective due to its ethical application, the industry's credibility will improve. This will give the public more confidence and faith in the role that public relations plays and the messages practitioners place in the public domain.

In conclusion, it is proposed that persuasive ethical communication must be accurate, truthful and transparent. A forum for debate must be created, whereby other perspectives and ideas can be expressed in the public domain. Furthermore, those who wish to participate in the public debate must be assured of fairness and equity. This is achieved by ensuring people have equal ability, knowledge, understanding and resources in order for them to participate in the public dialogue meaningfully. If they do not, then public relations practitioners should strive to create an appropriate balance in order for their own campaign to be considered truly ethical. Achieving these principles compels public relations practitioners to give long-term consideration to the impact of their communication efforts on the organisation's, or client's, stakeholders. This gives them an opportunity to consider and enhance the integrity and reputation of the public relations industry.

Therefore, the four components of stage three of the framework for evaluating the ethics of persuasive communication are:

1. Forum for debate
2. Accuracy, Truth and Transparency
3. Fairness and Equity
4. Long-Term Consideration

These three stages combine to form a qualitative model, which is labelled the CPE model (Communication + Persuasion + Ethics). Communication + Persuasion + Ethics = effective, ethical, persuasive communication.

COMMUNICATION PERSUASION ETHICS MODEL – THE CPE MODEL

The CPE model is proposed as a way of assessing the ethics of persuasive communication based on the principles extrapolated from the theories outlined in previous chapters. It should guide communicators to act in a way that is effective, persuasive and ethical. The ultimate goal of the model is to provide an alternative framework to help guide balanced public debate in the public domain. It is believed, based on the research presented so far, that balanced public debate leads to quality public opinion and discourse, and this in turn leads to a stable participative democracy.

Figure 5:1 CPE MODEL - PROPOSED QUALITATIVE MODEL TO EVALUATE PERSUASIVE ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION	+	**PERSUASION**	+	**ETHICS**
1. Attention		1. Proposal		1. Forum for Debate
2. Comprehension		2. Freedom of Choice		2. Accuracy, Truth and Transparency
3. Relevance (impact)		3. Ethical Behaviour		3. Fairness and Equity
4. Persuasiveness		4. Change of State		4. Long-Term Consideration

Communication + Persuasion + Ethics = Effective, Ethical Persuasive Communication

The CPE model will be used later to evaluate the communication case study outlined in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX – CASE STUDY: AUCKLAND REGIONAL WATER REVIEW

The test case for the CPE model is the Auckland Regional Water Review carried out by six of the Auckland region's local authorities in 1999.

In 1999, the Auckland, Manukau, Waitakere, North Shore, Papakura and Rodney councils began a review of the Auckland region's water, wastewater and stormwater services. The need for the review was based on the realisation that continued growth of the Auckland region was placing significant pressure on the region's water, wastewater and stormwater services; the existing infrastructure was aging significantly in some parts of the city, costs for the treatment and delivery of services were increasing, as were environmental requirements.

The review project can be described in terms of the communications model set out in Chapter Two. The project has identifiable senders, receivers, messages and channels (see Figure 6: 3). Furthermore, the project can be defined as 'managed communication' because the communication is planned, with clear aims and strategies designed to influence the opinions and actions of the target audiences. It is an example of how public relations uses inherently persuasive communication to achieve opinion change.

Because this project is managing communication in the public arena, the communicator has a responsibility to the audience. This responsibility is implicit with 'professional' roles, but also because of the power and influence that can be exercised over people by the communicator, or by the client or organisation they represent.

The extent of opinion change in this project was not scientifically measured and the degree of opinion change is therefore difficult to assess, however each communication message can still be evaluated in terms of the effectiveness, persuasiveness and ethics of each message or action.

The water review project, from a communication's perspective was primarily a public information and consultation campaign. It was designed to raise awareness, inform, educate and encourage participation in a public consultation programme. This is typical of most public relations campaigns, which first need to stimulate interest, communicate a message, and then effect a change in (or maintain) behaviour. In terms of the CPE model, the campaign needed to attract attention, be comprehensible and relevant to the target audience; and it needed to persuade people to take action.

BACKGROUND

The review project was undertaken by six of the Auckland region's councils with support and advice from three different groups of consultants. Historically, the provision and management of water, wastewater and stormwater services was the responsibility of local authorities. In Auckland, this has been complicated with dual regional and local responsibilities sitting alongside each other. Since the late 1980s, Watercare Services has been responsible for bulk regional water and wastewater services, with local authorities responsible for retail services and for stormwater.

Currently, each local authority has a different management structure. However, each of the authority's systems are dependent on and part of the regional water and wastewater network, whose combined assets are valued at $NZD3billion. This infrastructure is made up of dams, pumping stations, treatment plants and pipelines which service the Auckland region's combined population of 1.1 million.

The need for a comprehensive review of the region's water, wastewater, and stormwater services was identified in 1999. Cost increases in the water industry of around $NZD4.7 billion in capital expenditure over the next 17 years were predicted in order to address three key issues. Firstly, to renew and maintain ageing infrastructure; secondly, to achieve rising environmental standards and expectations; and thirdly, to meet the needs of expected population growth and mitigate the negative environmental impacts of that growth. The review also needed to take into consideration Auckland's unique water issues, such as the range of bodies involved in management and governance of water, predicted population growth, the need to ensure quality drinking water, a clean environment, the provision of affordable water, wastewater and stormwater supply and management. The authorities undertaking the review believed that the industry itself required restructuring and review to address these issues.

REVIEW STRATEGY

The water review project was managed by a steering group of council employees that drew on consultant advice when required. The need for a comprehensive public information and consultation campaign was identified as part of the review process. This required a carefully managed communication process to influence public discourse in order to achieve well-informed feedback to assist political decision-making.

The strategy for the review was to develop specific objectives, to draft options for public discussion and to do this in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including iwi, industry providers, key water services clients, residents of the Auckland region, and elected members of local authorities.

Broadly, the review focused on:

- Developing desired outcomes for the industry
- Assessing the status of the industry today
- Developing scenarios for the industry
- Developing a shortlist of options for the industry
- Evaluation of the shortlist of options
- Consultation with stakeholders

Structure Of Review

The review was led and managed by staff and political representatives of the six participating councils. A staff steering group was formed to develop and manage the review and to co-ordinate all phases of the review in order to present information back to the political representatives of the councils who were responsible for making the final decision as to the future of Auckland's water, wastewater and stormwater industries.

Figure 6:1 Review Participants

- 6 Councils – elected members
- Staff of 6 Councils
- Consultants
- Public Consultation:
  - *Water Community Advisory Group*
  - *Industry Stakeholder Forum*
  - *Wet Industries Focus Group*
  - *Iwi*
  - *Pacific Island Community*
  - *Youth*
  - *Residents of the Auckland region*

The review began in 1999 and was finished in mid 2001. A timetable of review stages and milestones can be found in the Appendix on page A34.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The aim of the communication strategy was to raise awareness about the review and the reasons for it by informing people of the Auckland region about water, stormwater and wastewater issues being faced by the region, thus enabling informed discussion and educated feedback for the purposes of decision-making by elected members.

The resulting communications strategy involved analysing existing information about people's views of water and water services in order to assess what level of understanding people had of water issues, and to assess what their feelings towards water were. This gave the communications team an idea of how much effort needed to be put into the public information campaign. The next step was to build awareness of the issues that Auckland faced in terms of the long-term provision of water services, and to highlight the need for a review of the water industry. The next step in the process, was to engage residents of the Auckland region in a consultation designed to invite feedback about the water industry, the aims set for the industry, and also which options they preferred for the future of Auckland's water industry.

The final step was to communicate back to the public, or make available to the public the final results of the consultation and the ultimate decisions made by the councillors from each participating council. This was partially achieved by the final report/decisions being made available on the Water Review website.

A range of stakeholders (see Figure 6:2) were identified to help develop the context for the review and to assist with implementation of the review. These groups were provided with information at an appropriate level of complexity for their area of interest. A full explanation of what took place for each stakeholder group can be found in the Appendix on page A35. Following is a summary of each target audience and stakeholder and their relationship to the water industry.

Figure 6:2 Target Audiences and Stakeholders in the Auckland Regional Water Review

Audience	Relationship
Auckland Water Steering Group	Managing the water review
Water Communications Sub-Group	Managing the communications component of the review
Stakeholder Forums	Industry operators, local authority councillors and staff, consultants
“Wet Industry” Focus Group	Large volume consumers from a variety of different private and public sectors
Community Advisory Group	Group of ratepayers randomly selected by an independent market research facilitator to represent a variety of socio-economic demographics
Iwi	As mana whenua of the land and its resources such as water
General Public	As ratepayers and consumers within the Auckland region

Summarised below in Figure 6:3, are the key communication aspects of the review presented within the different components of a basic communication model as described in Chapter One.

Figure 6:3 Auckland Regional Water Review Represented within a Communications Model

Sender	▪ Staff of the Auckland region's councils: Auckland, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere, Papakura and Rodney ▪ Councillors of the Auckland region's councils ▪ Watercare ▪ Iwi ▪ Water Pressure Group/Citizens Against Privatisation – "The People's Option Coalition"
Receiver	▪ Residents and Ratepayers of the Auckland region ▪ Watercare and other regional water providers ▪ "Wet Industries Group" ▪ Focus Group ▪ Iwi ▪ Youth ▪ Pacific Island and other ethnic groups
Message	▪ Need future quality supply of water and disposal of wastewater ▪ Need to reduce pollution of waterways ▪ Significant expenditure required to ensure future supply, treatment and disposal of water, stormwater and wastewater ▪ Ten outcomes proposed for the water industry by the councils ▪ Three options proposed by the councils for reform of the water industry
Medium	▪ Print advertising in Herald and suburban/local newspapers ▪ Radio advertising ▪ Billboard advertising ▪ 'Event' at fountain: media briefing, banner across Queen Elizabeth Square fountain, tinting of fountain, handing out promotional flyer ▪ Promotional flyer ▪ Website with public factsheets and original reports from the councils ▪ 0508 freephone number for people to request information and ask basic questions ▪ Media coverage in newspapers, radio, and minority television programming ▪ Public consultation survey in Herald, suburban newspapers and available from website or by free phoning ▪ Presence at Pasifika and other organised church and community meetings

The communications strategy included, amongst other things, communication objectives, communication messages, and communication tactics. These are presented in the sections below. The campaign itself was split into four stages with on-going communication to all stakeholders running alongside each stage.

Communication Objectives

The following objectives were set out in the communication strategy:

1. To raise awareness about problems being faced by the water industry, government and consumers.
2. To increase discussion of issue and problems within the media, ensuring accurate representation.
3. To establish target public's understanding of the issues and problems surrounding water, wastewater and stormwater.
4. To manage and address misconceptions that are publicised either by pressure groups or the media etc. to increase accurate public understanding.
5. To ensure balanced information is available to target publics on request at all times.
6. To communicate simply and accurately the options that will be formulated by the water steering group to the target publics.
7. To provide open channels of communication to target publics and accurate information about water, wastewater and stormwater.
8. To create appropriate forums for target publics to provide feedback on issues and to prioritise those issues.
9. To provide communications support for participating organisations, elected members and stakeholders who may be spokespeople.
10. To maximise integration of key messages into LNO's (Local Network Operators) and local bodies' own communications.

Communication Messages

The following messages were set out in the communications strategy:

1. The Auckland region has key differences to the rest of New Zealand and faces unique problems with water, stormwater and wastewater.
2. All the councils in the wider Auckland region are reviewing the water industry together.
3. The water problems Auckland faces are as significant as Auckland's transport and congestion problems.
4. Auckland's significant growth projections will compound water problems.
5. Change is essential to minimise continually escalating costs.
6. Public understanding of the issues is essential to ensuring that people of the Auckland region support and change to Auckland's water industry.
7. The key issues of the review are:
    a. Environmental standards
    b. Reliability of service delivery
    c. Aging infrastructure
    d. Growth pressures on the Auckland region
    e. Cost of providing services to people of the Auckland region

Communications Tactics

The following section explores the individual campaign components.

Figure 6:4 Auckland Regional Water Review Campaign Components

Print advertisements	Print advertising focused on promoting the upcoming consultation period and consultation submission form. It directed people to the freephone and website for further information. 1 advertisement was run in the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper, and 13 in suburban and community newspapers (this excludes the inclusion of the consultation submission form which was inserted into the above papers).
Radio advertisements	Short, catchy advertisements were produced to draw attention to the consultation period and highlight the relevance of the review to listeners. The advertisements directed people to the freephone and website for further information. 163 spots were run on 6 different radio stations.
Billboards and bus shelters	The billboards and bus shelter posters were designed to catch people's attention, and included bright fluorescent green water running out of a tap. The slogan "WATER. How do you like yours?" appeared in bold writing, and an invitation to "Have your say" with the consultation dates noted, and references to the freephone and website for further information (See Appendix page A42). 11 billboards around the Auckland region were booked, and 31 bus shelters in North Shore (which does not have billboards)
Consultation launch and banner	The start of the consultation period was marked with a quirky stunt designed to catch attention. The water in the Queen Elizabeth square fountain was tinted bright fluorescent green, and a large banner erected overhead (see Appendix page A42). Flyers were handed out to morning commuters as they made their way to work through this busy downtown Auckland intersection; and an informal media briefing was given to local and regional newspapers.
Flyers and posters	1000 flyers and 2000 posters were printed and distributed at events and community buildings around the region. The flyers and posters were the same as the billboards and bus shelter posters.
Website, with factsheets and reports	A dedicated and comprehensive website was developed for the review. It presented both easy to understand information, as well as detailed council agenda and reports that were prepared throughout the review. The site was publicised in all communication media, and linkages from council website and any other related organisations to the review website were made.
Factsheets	Easy to understand factsheets addressing 10 different water related topics were available from the review website or by calling the freephone number.
0508 freephone	A dedicated freephone number was set up and service by the Auckland City Council's call centre. This service was manned 24 hours, 7 days a week and could provide callers with a large amount of information about the review or refer them on to relevant council staff working on the review.

Media relations	Two media briefing were held for the review – one at the start of the review, and one at the launch of the consultation period. At other key milestone, media releases (see Appendix page A48) were made to local and regional media outlets.
Consultation submission form	A formal consultation submission form was printed and distributed through suburban newspapers, community newspapers and Auckland editions of the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper. The form included information about the draft outcomes for the industry and the different options being proposed to achieve those outcomes. The form directed the submitter to the freephone and website should they require further information. The form was also available by calling the freephone number, and could be downloaded or submitted from the website. The form was also translated into a number of different languages to encourage different ethnic communities to participate. 10,000 loose-leaf submission forms were printed.
Community meetings and events	Council staff offered to speak to community groups about the review, and attended community meeting and events when invited. A concerted effort was made to target ethnic groups this way.
Workshops, forums and hui	About 80 representatives of the Local Network Operators, Watercare, councillors and staff of each council participating in the review formed the stakeholder group who met at key intervals during the review for full day forums. The forums focused on discussing and debating a range of issues, and largely set the context for the review. In particular the forum was used to discuss desired outcomes for the industry, the status of the industry, scenarios to address the issues faced by the industry, a shortlist of options, and an evaluation of the shortlist of options. A series of regional hui were held on marae. To ensure that the industry review recognised the rights of iwi and the strong values held by Maori with regard to water. Consultants and council staff with responsibility for liaison with local iwi assisted this component of the consultation.
Community Advisory Group	This group was selected by an independent market research facilitator to provide representative feedback from a wide range of socio-economic groups from around the Auckland region. The purpose was to obtain detailed feedback from the group in a more intimate setting than the public consultation process. It also enabled the councils to provide more information and personal support to the group than was possible in the broader process. In that respect, it provided a benchmark as to what the public consultation process would produce, if more resources were available to support a comprehensive and highly participative process with all residents of the Auckland region. Five meetings were held and facilitated by the independent market research facilitator. They discussed the water industry and the need for the review, the draft outcomes for the water industry, the status of the water industry at the time, the long list of scenarios, and finally the short list of options.

Stage One – Public Perception/Awareness Analysis

The first stage was used to establish what level of awareness people of the Auckland region had about water services and what values they held.

This stage included reviewing previous consultation feedback and existing market research undertaken by any of the councils and their water service providers in the Auckland region. This material was audited by an independent public relations consultancy. Media clippings dating back to a previous but uncompleted water review were also analysed.

The results of this analysis were used as input to the development of the draft outcomes for the water industry and to provide a baseline for evaluating the changes in public awareness as the review progressed. This stage was also used to develop communications planning for the following stages.

Relationship to CPE Model

This stage of the project enabled the communications team to plan a campaign designed to be as effective as possible. By analysing current public perception and awareness, an assessment could be made about how the audience might receive the message; what the messages should be and how they should be structured; which mediums would be the most effective for the message and the receiver. Decisions such as these enabled the communications team to design a communications strategy that would hopefully attract attention, help make the information comprehensible and relevant to the target audiences. Achieving these things should ultimately make the communication effective and therefore persuasive as per the first stage of the CPE model.

Stage Two – Building Awareness Of Issues Confronting The Water Industry

The second stage was used to create dissonance in an effort to draw people's attention to the issues faced by the region, and challenge their current thinking about water, and then to provide a platform for discussion of these issues. Mediums chosen included the news media, advertising, the distribution of reports and agendas, and through a range of hui, workshops and forums. During this stage a large amount of public information was prepared, and spokespeople and politicians well briefed to enable them to support the public communication process.

Key messages throughout this stage focused on the issues being faced by the Auckland region, the need for the review, and an indication that a public information and consultation campaign was being embarked upon in order to stimulate public discussion and encourage feedback.

Relationship to CPE Model

The provision of hui, workshops and various other forums provided a forum for debate. The public had the opportunity to make their own comments through the news media or other communication mediums of their choice. To that end, a pressure group developed and distributed their own information and held their own events to discuss the review, providing an alternative view on the debate. They also participated officially in the review.

All of the material prepared for the review by the communications team was developed with the aim of being accurate, truthful and transparent. This meant providing information that could easily be understood by the target audiences that clearly depicted the state of the Auckland region's water industry and the issues facing it in the coming years. Information was also provided on the objectives set for the review by the councils and industry stakeholders. Like the options that were developed for public consultation, extensive feedback was sought on these. From the viewpoint of those managing and participating in the review, these steps provided transparency to the public.

Because the consultation was structured to ensure representation of as many varied target audiences as possible through choice of media in advertising, hui, workshops and forum, it was considered by those managing the review that the process was fair and equitable. Feedback received outside of the planned strategy was still acknowledged and taken into consideration, demonstrating that a true forum for debate existed and that as many people as possible had a fair and equitable opportunity to express their views. These factors also demonstrated that the campaign gave long-term consideration to the water industry and its users, by undertaking a review that stimulated meaningful discourse of the issues that should not create confusion or misunderstanding in the future. It was found that implementing a campaign in this way also benefits the long-term view of the public relations industry itself, as it represented good use of managed communication in order to stimulate balanced public debate in the public domain.

Based on the above comments, it is concluded that the implementation of the communication strategy in this stage saw the achievement of the four principles (forum for debate, accuracy, truth and transparency, fairness and equity, long-term consideration) outlined in the third ethics stage of the CPE model.

Stage Three – Discussion Of Options And Their Respective Merits

The third stage represented a more formalised structure for the community to participate in the review. It included a consultation process that sought feedback through a written submission form, focus groups, industry workshops, and hui with iwi.

This stage was designed to enable operators and politicians to draw conclusions about the acceptability to people of the various options.

Key messages throughout this stage focused on the state of the current water industry, the proposed industry aims, and the options for changes and restructuring in the industry to meet those industry aims and improve the state of Auckland's water industry. The public were asked to participate by going on-line to access information or to call a free phone number, and to fill out the public consultation submission form.

Relationship to CPE Model

This stage of the campaign sought formalised feedback from the target audiences in the form of submissions to the councils. Participants were asked to comment on the outcomes being sought for the water industry; and which option, for restructuring the water industry, would best meet those outcomes and the needs of the Auckland region.

Seeking this feedback aligns with the second stage of the CPE model, whereby a position or proposal is made to the receiver who is ethically persuaded to make a choice. The Water Review campaign can be said to be persuasive because it provides a proposal – the outcomes and options - and seeks a change of state by asking the target audiences to participate and commit to an option that is different to what is currently provided. Participants have freedom to accept or reject the arguments put forward by the campaign, and also the freedom to choose from a number of different options for reform of the water industry. Discussion of the communication and ethics stages of the CPE model (stage one and three) has also shown that the campaign was implemented with ethical behaviour.

Stage Four – Feedback To The Public And Evaluation

This final stage was intended to communicate back to the public the results of the review. Low-key market research was planned to monitor the level of awareness and understanding of issues at the completion of the review to assess the effectiveness of the communications strategy. However, at the completion of the review, this stage was not planned or implemented.

Relationship to CPE Model

This stage of the review reinforces all stages of the CPE model, as it completes the communication cycle and in particular demonstrates the transparency of the review process, showing how those managing the review and making the decisions have considered feedback. Undertaking to communicate with target publics and any other stakeholders at the completion of a project creates an opportunity to talk about how feedback has been incorporated into a decision-making process. Even if the results of a process are different to what some target publics were asking for, this process enables them to see who and why end decisions were made. Providing feedback is very important for the long-term consideration of those that have participated as it affects their views of why the decision-makers chose a particular option, and how well an issue has been managed. It also effects their decisions as to whether they will participate in such a process again.

Evaluating, reviewing or debriefing a project provides opportunities to assess how well a campaign has been implemented and how ethically the process has been managed. These two concepts reinforce the ethical behaviour of public relations practitioners and the practice of public relations, as it suggests that ‘getting it right’ is an important aspect to every communications campaign.

RESULTS OF THE WATER REVIEW

The results presented here are the qualitative assessment of the participant observer and author of this thesis, Heidi McLeod, and are based on debriefings and informal discussions with the water review team, stakeholders and campaign participants.

The Auckland Region Water Review was managed by a steering group made up of directors and policy staff from Auckland, North Shore, Manukau, and Waitakere city councils, the communications sub-group project manager, an independently appointed project manager, policy consultants and attendance from time to time from an Auckland Regional Council representative. The steering group's responsibilities included the planning, co-ordination and implementation of the review, as well as political and stakeholder liaison. This was largely an internal process, with sub-groups focusing on communication, policy and Iwi. The group was successful in implementing the review and undertaking a sizeable regional public information and consultation campaign. The review took a relatively long time – 1999 to 2001 - yet it maintained good momentum and control of the review process, allowing for effective planning, participation and implementation. All work required to carry out the review was completed on time and within budget.

The Auckland Water Review Communications Sub-Group met weekly, and membership included communications staff members from Auckland, North Shore, Manukau, Waitakere councils, and for a short time, a communications staff member from the Auckland Regional Council. This group was responsible for developing and implementing a public information and consultation campaign that provided adequate opportunities for people to participate, and that generated consistent and reliable feedback from residents of the Auckland region. This included writing and producing all of the communications material used in the review. The public information and consultation campaign was developed as a four-stage process (Public Perception/Awareness Analysis, Building Awareness Of Issues Confronting The Water Industry, Discussion Of Options And Their Respective Merits, Feedback To The Public And Evaluation) as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The design of the campaign was successful in generating consistent and reliable feedback from different audiences. While media coverage was low to moderate, there was a good response from ethnic and alternative media. Media coverage was mostly in suburban and community newspapers, although a comprehensive feature in *The New Zealand Herald* (Dearnaley 2001) and some smaller pieces were also published (see Appendix page A52). Ethnic media including radio and television stations also gave airtime to the issue, which helped in reaching typically underrepresented audiences.

Provocative billboards, print and radio advertising and supporting print material stimulated interest during the public information stage. An image of bright fluorescent green water was used to catch people’s eye and stimulate thought about water quality and how important that is to people. Tinting the water green in the Queen Elizabeth square fountain for the launch of the consultation attracted the attention of morning commuters and tied in with the rest of the print campaign. Being visual and colourful, the stunt helped secure front page colour coverage in a number of suburban and community newspapers, as well as a mention on mainstream radio.

A dedicated website was developed which featured easy to understand information as well as more detailed information, council agendas and consultants reports. A set of downloadable factsheets was produced covering a range of issues in an easy to understand format. Consultation submission forms could also be downloaded, and some people made their submissions on-line. All this information was also available by calling a dedicated free-phone 24 hours, 7 day a week telephone line.

A significant amount of effort went into talking with ethnic communities who do not typically participate in community consultation. Meetings, interviews and advertising in ethnic media, as well as a presence at the Pasifika Festival helped to spread information and encourage participation among these target publics.

Opportunities for discussion and debate in the public sphere were provided through a variety of forums and workshops designed for specific groups, and a wide variety of people participated in the review through these. Local Network Operators, Watercare, councillors and relevant staff of participating councils attended stakeholder forums. These were detailed, facilitated discussions on key industry issues, and the feedback was used as an input to the policy development process of the review, and as a benchmark of industry views regarding the review. The forums were very well attended and all participants involved themselves fully in the work undertaken in the forums.

Similarly, workshops for a ‘wet industry’ focus group made up of large volume consumers from across the region were well attended. Participants recognised that this was a good opportunity for open, frank and direct discussion about water services, and appreciated the opportunity to be involved and to provide feedback which would be used as an input to policy development and assessment of industry performance.

The results of a specific consultation with a Community Advisory Group gave an indication of what results might have been achieved if a more comprehensive and participative consultation was undertaken with residents in the Auckland region. This group was selected by an independent market research facilitator to provide representative feedback from a wide range of socio-economic groups from around the Auckland region. Five meetings were held and facilitated by the independent market research facilitator. The purpose was to obtain detailed feedback from the group in a more intimate setting than the public consultation process. It also enabled the six councils involved to provide more information and personal support to the group than was possible in the broader process.

These workshops were also well attended and participation was excellent. Participants valued the access they were given to detailed information (presented simply and explained carefully), and the availability of staff with expertise in the water industry to answer questions. The workshops allowed for plenty of discussion time, resulting in quality feedback. This feedback provided a reliable benchmark for consultation with other audiences. Interestingly, the results of this group were consistent with the results of the public consultation submission process and feedback from other audiences.

The campaign also stimulated strong pressure group activity, which had the potential to de-rail the planned campaign. A coalition of ‘Citizens Against Privatisation’ and the ‘Water Pressure Group’ developed their own option – “The People’s Option”, which they sought to have included in the consultation (see Appendix page A61). The Water Review team met with the Water Pressure Group Coalition to discuss their issues. No consensus could be achieved and the coalition did not agree that the underlying values that were important to them were reflected in any of the water review team's proposed options. A key point of contention was the issue of whether or not water infrastructure would be privatised, although the council steering group and elected members emphatically stated publicly that privatisation was not an option. The water review team rejected the coalition's request for "The People's Option" to be included in the consultation. The following reasons were put forward to the Water Pressure Group Coalition:

- Some features of their option already existed in all of the other options
- Some of their reasoning and arguments were economically inaccurate
- Some of the features would not achieve the outcomes set for the water industry through the review
- Their option would be too cumbersome and costly to implement and manage

Most importantly, "The People's Option" would not encourage people to conserve water or to recognise the true cost of providing water services. However, the coalition produced printed postcards with "The People's Option" on it, and they distributed them widely and encouraged people to send them to the Minister for Auckland Affairs, Judith Tizard, who then forwarded them to the Water Review team.

Feedback and discussion of issues was welcomed and encouraged throughout the review, although the Water Review team found it difficult to combat inaccurate information disseminated by the Water Pressure Group Coalition. As activists they defaced billboards, protested outside meetings, distributed media releases to Internet news service sites, and posted information on their own dedicated water review website (see Appendix page A71). The Water Review team did provide them with opportunities to speak at public meetings and their viewpoint was always acknowledged publicly. The postcard tally was included in the consultation results and reported to elected members. A total of 2,486 postcards distributed by the Water Pressure Group Coalition were also received by the close of the consultation period, although many more continued to be received. The source of many of these could not be verified.

The general public consultation period ran between the 21st February and 21st March 2001. The submission forms appeared in *The New Zealand Herald* on Wednesday 21st February and throughout the week following in the suburban and community newspapers. The submission form was also available from the website, by calling the 0508 freephone number or a local council. The submission form asked residents of the region to give their feedback on which of the three options they preferred, as well as the outcomes drafted for the industry. From across the Auckland region, 2,307 submissions were received, as well as 2,486 protest postcards from the Water Pressure Group Coalition. Expressed as percentages of the Auckland region's population this is 0.18% official submissions, and 0.19% Water Pressure Group Coalition Postcards, giving a combined total of 0.37%. This is not an unusual result for local government consultation:

"People struggle to see the relevance between themselves and what local councils do, sometimes they are not even aware who their local council is or what they do. As a result, we do not get huge numbers of submitters to consultations such as the Council's Annual Plan - over the last five years, we have had between 0.25% and 0.53% of the city's population make a submission" (personal communication with Wally Thomas regarding the apathy of ratepayers in local government consultation, Waitakere City Council 2004).

Melville (1998) says "there are a lot of reasons why sparking enthusiasm for public involvement in local democracies is tough going" (27). He calls this lack of desire to participate in political processes, public apathy. A low response rate in the Water Review was also an expected result for the Water Review Team. For this reason, reviewing previous consultation feedback and market research and the use of facilitated in-depth workshops were used to act as a benchmark or control test of what results might have been achieved if more of the target publics had participated.

At the completion of the review, public feedback, and feedback from iwi was analysed alongside extensive policy work to create a report with recommendations on how the issues the water industry was facing could be dealt with. The ultimate decision on these recommendations lay with the elected members of each local body. The councils all formally received and considered the findings of the Water Review. The findings and recommendations presented to the councils were lengthy and more complex than just choosing one of the consulted upon options (see Appendix A74). Some councils supported the findings and recommendations of the review, while others did not. Briefly, it can be said that very little consensus was reached as to how the water industry should be reformed to best meet the needs of the Auckland region. A media release was released signalling the completion of the review and outlining the results. This concluded the Auckland Regional Water Review.

CHAPTER SEVEN – ASSESSING THE CASE STUDY USING THE CPE MODEL

When assessed against the CPE model proposed in this thesis, the Auckland Regional Water Review was a relatively persuasive and ethical public relations campaign (see Figure 7:2). It was largely effective in achieving its broad goal of encouraging people to participate in the consultation. The campaign, rather than advocate and persuade people to adopt a certain viewpoint, focused on persuading people that the water industry needed restructuring.

However, the extent of the effectiveness of the campaign is debatable. It could be argued that the campaign was not effective at encouraging enough participation to motivate elected members to make a choice. On the other hand, it could also be claimed that the public information and consultation campaign generated consistent and considered feedback across a range of audiences. A wide range of organisations and people from throughout the Auckland region sent a total of 2,307 submission forms. From these submitters, 49 people spoke at hearings held around the city.

The view of the Water Review Team was that, had further financial resources and time been available, the same results would have been achieved with a larger number of participants. This view was based upon pre-campaign evaluation of existing public opinion and results gathered from the Water Community Advisory Group. Therefore, the Water Review Team considered they had implemented a reasonably effective and ethical campaign.

EVALUATION OF WATER REVIEW CASE STUDY AGAINST THE CPE MODEL

The CPE model (see Figure 7:1) has been developed based on communication and persuasion theory to produce a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of managed communication, the persuasiveness of managed communication, and the ethics of managed communication (refer to discussion in Chapter Five). This, it is believed, provides an assessment of how persuasive and ethical a communications or public relations campaign can be, or has been, according to whether the CPE model is used before or after the campaign's implementation.

Figure 7:1 CPE MODEL - PROPOSED QUALITATIVE MODEL TO EVALUATE PERSUASIVE ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION +	PERSUASION +	ETHICS
1. Attention	5. Proposal	9. Forum for Debate
2. Comprehension	6. Freedom of Choice	10. Accuracy, Truth and Transparency
3. Relevance (impact)	7. Ethical Behaviour	11. Fairness and Equity
4. Persuasiveness	8. Change of State	12. Long-term Consideration

Communication + Persuasion + Ethics = Effective, Ethical Persuasive Communication

Applying The CPE Model

Analysis of a communication campaign against the CPE model can be presented in table form (see Figure 7:2). This provides a brief overview of where the campaign is successful in terms of achieving effective, ethical persuasive communication. When the CPE model is used during the development phase of a communications campaign, low scoring areas can be re-evaluated and adjusted to ensure uniformly high results, which would suggest that the campaign, when implemented, would achieve effective, ethical persuasive communication.

Rating a campaign against the CPE model requires an understanding of the principles as presented in Chapter Five; and a qualitative assessment of how well the campaign will, or did, meet each of the principles.

The Water Review case study is now qualitatively assessed against the CPE model under each principle. In the following pages, where discussion comments on ‘effectiveness’ of the campaign, this is considered effectiveness as determined by the CPE model. It is also important to note that the conclusions made in the following section are the qualitative assessment of the participant observer, Heidi McLeod, who was a member of the Water Review Communications Sub-Group and Water Review Team. The conclusions are based on the feedback from the Water Review Communications Sub-Group, the Water Review Team, stakeholders and campaign participants.

Figure 7:2 THE AUCKLAND REGIONAL WATER REVIEW CASE STUDY ASSESSED AGAINST THE CPE MODEL

	CPE PRINCIPLE	LOW RATING	MEDIUM RATING	HIGH RATING
COMMUNICATION	1. Attention		■	
	2. Comprehension			■
	3. Relevance (impact)		■	
	4. Persuasiveness		■	
PERSUASION	5. Proposal			■
	6. Freedom of Choice			■
	7. Ethical Behaviour			■
	8. Change of State			■
ETHICS	9. Forum for Debate	■		
	10. Accuracy, Truth and Transparency			■
	11. Fairness & Equity	■		
	12. Long-Term Consideration		■	

Communication: Attention

The CPE model suggests that analysing the audience (see Chapter Five) is important for creating a campaign that catches the attention of the target audience.

Based on the results discussed in Chapter Six, it can be concluded that the campaign was moderately successful in attracting attention. The billboards, bus shelter advertisements, print and radio advertising, posters and flyers were all designed to be eye-catching, memorable and direct people's attention to the consultation period, freephone number and website (samples of some of the communications material can be found in the Appendix page A42). The campaign results show that the communication messages and the communication media were effective in encouraging some people to visit the website, call the freephone and ultimately make a submission during the consultation period. However more success at attracting attention would have been desirable, as it is likely that this would have led to more participation in the campaign.

Communication: Comprehension

Analysing the audience (see Chapter Five) as per the CPE model also helps the public relations practitioner to develop communication messages that will improve the target audiences understanding of an issue. The Water Review campaign achieved good comprehension of the extensive and at times complex information. Comprehension in the campaign was aided by the production of a number of communication messages and communication media specially tailored for different target audiences such as large water consumers or community representatives. A series of factsheets, reports, website information, and workshop material were developed to raise people's awareness and understanding of the issues. Based on the results, this enabled target publics to choose a medium and level of information that best suited their own needs in terms of comprehension. It can be concluded that the campaign was effective in terms of comprehension, because of the quality of feedback and discussion in workshops, and the quality of the submissions received during the consultation period.

Communication: Relevance (impact)

Once again, analysing the audience (see Chapter Five) helps to ensure that communication messages are developed to highlight the relevance of the issue to the target audience. The Water Review campaign was highly relevant to the target publics as they are all consumers who pay for water, stormwater and wastewater services. Therefore, communication messages regarding existing services and area specific issues were tailored for each city within the Auckland region, to increase the relevance to target publics in these different areas.

It can be concluded that the campaign was successful at highlighting the relevance of the campaign to target publics based on the quality of submissions received, indicating that participants had understood how reform of the water industry would affect them. However, it could also be argued that the campaign did not achieve sufficient relevance for target publics because only a small amount of people made submissions (0.18% official submissions, 0.19% Water Pressure Group Coalition Postcards, giving a combined total of 0.37%), although without feedback from participants after the campaign, it is difficult to assess whether it was a failure of the campaign to attract attention or a failure to make the campaign relevant, or even what combination of the two caused a low level of submissions.

Communication: Persuasiveness

In terms of persuasion theory (Petty & Cacioppo 1996) it can be concluded that the communication itself was persuasive because, as will be discussed below, the communication was ethical and met the criteria listed in stage three of the CPE model to a high level, although not as fully as possible. This will be further explained in the ethics section below.

However, it could also be concluded that the campaign was only moderately successful in terms of persuasion based upon the amount of people who were persuaded to participate and make a submission during the consultation period. The results show that there was a low level of response (.18% official submissions, .19% Water Pressure Group Coalition Postcards, giving a combined total of .37%).

Persuasion: Proposal

One principle of the CPE model (see Chapter Five), and a defining characteristic of persuasion, is the requirement for persuasive communication to include a clear proposal (Hovland et al. 1963; Skinner 1938). The Water Review campaign contained a clear proposal asking the target publics to make a submission during the consultation period. The number of returned submissions is an indicator that the proposal was effective with those who attended to the communication. It should be noted that the options for reform of the water industry were not considered a proposal, as it was not the intent of the campaign to persuade the target publics to support one or other of the options, rather they were being asked to consider participating in the campaign by making a submission.

Persuasion: Freedom of Choice

The concept of 'freedom of choice' is an important principle in the CPE model and a defining characteristic of persuasion (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990; Larson 1998). In the Water Review campaign, the target publics had free choice whether they participated in the consultation by making a submission or not. There was no legal or other constraint that forced the target publics to take part, as is the case with the Census for example.

Persuasion: Ethical Behaviour

Based on the work of Baker and Martinson (2002), Olasky (1986) and Riley (1993) the notion of ethical behaviour in managed communication is included in the CPE model, as an indicator of ethical persuasive communication. It is considered that those implementing the Water Review campaign displayed ethical behaviour. This is concluded based on the following facts:

- the campaign was an open and transparent process;
- a variety of relevant target publics were invited to participate;
- a large range of information was made accessible to all people in the Auckland region,
- offers were made to community groups for presentations to be made to them about the review and the issues at stake;
- information was translated into a number of different languages (and a variety of ethnic media were used);

- and the water review team met and discussed issues with pressure groups and did not discourage different points of view from being expressed.

Persuasion: Change of State

Another defining characteristic of persuasion is evidence of a change of state in the target audience (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990). A change of state, suggests that the target audience has attended to the communication messages and self-persuaded themselves to retain or adopt a belief, attitude of behaviour. The change of state sought in this campaign, was not a change in opinion towards or away from the options being consulted on. The change of state that occurred was the realisation that the water industry needed to be reformed and the making of a submission. While the amount of people that took part and were persuaded was not statistically significant, the conclusion drawn here is that this is not because the campaign lacked persuasiveness, but rather that the campaign did not attract enough attention.

Ethics: Forum for debate

Creating a forum for debate is the single-most important principle of the CPE model (see Chapter Five). It is this principle that creates the most potential for the work of public relations practitioners and others who manage communication to have their work seen as ethical.

This campaign achieved a reasonable level of debate in the public domain compared with a traditional two-way communication model, and with what is generally expected with local government consultation (Melville 1998). However, if the campaign was evaluated against the multi-sided communication approach (Chapter Three) as well as the CPE model, it would be concluded that the campaign did not achieve a high enough level of debate.

It is under this principle of the CPE model that the campaign has been least successful. A more successful campaign would have stimulated and facilitated more 'senders' contributing to the public discourse, rather than a two-way exchange of communication. The water review team was the predominant ‘sender’ of communication messages, and while there was a very active pressure group also ‘sending’ communication messages and attracting attention, it was the water review team’s opinion that the pressure group’s communication messages were inaccurate and/or misleading. Therefore it is concluded, that the pressure group did not increase the quality of public discourse in terms of the CPE model.

Creating a meaningful forum for debate in a way that matches the multi-sided communication model is the hardest of the criterion to achieve, yet the greatest indicator or benchmark of effective persuasive ethical communication.

Ethics: Accuracy, Truth and Transparency

Inherent to the concept of ethics, is the need for accuracy, truth and transparency. Given that public relations practitioners are often challenged on their truthfulness (Stauber & Rampton 1995; Olasky 1986; Mayhew 1997; Ewen 1996), this principle has been included in the CPE model as a standard of practice that would help in achieving persuasive communication that is ethical.

The water review team worked hard to ensure that the information communicated was as accurate, truthful and transparent as possible. There were no queries or challenges to the accuracy of the information provided, except from the Water Pressure Group Coalition who disagreed with the water review team’s communication material. However the information was prepared and checked thoroughly by the water review team, consultants and also by the service providers themselves; and the Water Pressure Group Coalition was not able to disprove this data. Its own information was sourced or referenced from out of date or unrelated sources, making comparisons difficult or misleading for target publics. The water review team, and those that participated in the facilitated workshops as part of the campaign, considered that the material was accurate, truthful and transparent.

Ethics: Fairness and Equity

Building on the forum for debate principle, the concept of providing fairness and equity helps to create a level playing field for all those participating in the discourse (see Chapter Five). The communications campaign was designed to include a community advisory group to act as an indicator of what results the campaign may have achieved should further funds have been available to allow more participative consultation to be undertaken with the target publics. This gave the water review team confidence that the feedback from submissions was representative of what residents in the Auckland region that did not participate would have given if they had made a submission. It also gave the team confidence that those who made a submission had understood the issues as well as the people in the community advisory group who participated in a number of independently facilitated workshops.

However, this principle suggests that all target publics should have equal opportunity and resources to participate and initiate public discourse within the public domain. The water review team did not, in this case, fund or resource independent groups to participate and create a broader forum for debate. This factor means that the campaign was not as fair and equitable as it could have been, although the Water Pressure Group did participate in debate in the public domain, and was not prevented from doing so.

Ethics: Long-Term Consideration

By default, fulfilling the principles of the CPE model should lead to more faith in the communication process by participants and spectators, and lead to a more participative democracy (Mayhew 1997). Improving public discourse, and serving the public interest will also lead to an enhanced reputation for the public relations industry itself (Bivins 1993).

Despite some of the campaign's shortcomings in terms of attracting attention, creating a forum for debate, and increasing fairness and equity, the campaign was undertaken with a high degree of integrity. However this may have been somewhat undermined by the failure of the review to deliver a definitive outcome. This may have left participants feeling disillusioned with the consultation process, and discouraged from participating in future consultation exercises. The fact that no definitive outcome was reached meant that longer-term consideration of participants might not have been as positive as possible.

This principle is also relevant to the practice of public relations itself. It is concluded that enough of the CPE model was achieved for the campaign to be considered a good example of public relations current practice. Further, the campaign did nothing to negatively impact on the reputation of the public relations industry. However, it is believed that if the campaign had achieved the CPE model in full, and been an example of multi-sided communication, then an even more positive impact on the long-term future of the public relations industry would have been created.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CASE STUDY IDENTIFIED BY THE MODEL

Applying the model to the case study highlighted a number of shortcomings in the public information and consultation campaign. Of the twelve principles, six were achieved well (comprehension; proposal; freedom of choice; ethical behaviour; change of state; and accuracy, truth and transparency) and six were not achieved as well to a lesser or greater degree (attention; relevance; persuasion; forum for debate; fairness and equity; and long-term consideration).

The most significant failure of the case study was the lack of a forum for debate. Increasing the number of groups participating in the public discourse would have helped to draw attention to the campaign and stimulate more public debate of the issues. Informed public debate is likely to lead to a more stable social order (Mayhew 1997). When more people are aware of an issue, they are more likely to have a stake in the outcomes and want to participate. It can be argued that increased participation leads to a more stable and participative democracy that reflects the needs and aspirations of the society it serves. This opportunity for participation is an integral part of the forum for debate principle, and indicates that a forum has been created in terms of the CPE model.

Inviting or facilitating more groups to present their viewpoints in turn requires greater fairness and equity than was evident in the Auckland Regional Water Review. This may have required funding and resourcing on the part of the Auckland Region's Councils to enable these groups to participate on a level playing field. This would be a difficult principle to achieve, as it requires the 'sender' to be responsible for facilitating other groups to participate, including providing funds and resources to enable them to take part to the same degree as the 'sender'. This concept is not evident in current practice, and neither private or public sector would be likely to initiate it as it would substantially increase the cost, time and resource requirements for managed communication projects. It would also increase the chances that the results of the project might be at odds with the aims of the 'sender' in terms of an asymmetrical communication model (Grunig 1992). However, the theory indicates that opening up the public debate to different viewpoints would be likely to increase the benefits to the public interest (Bivins 1993).

This failure of the case study in terms of creating a forum for debate has a flow on effect to the long-term consideration and fairness and equity principles. Improving the ethics of persuasive communication also serves to improve the long-term consideration of both stakeholders and the public relations industry itself. The better the process and outcomes of a project, the better the public interest is served, and the more willing the public will be to participate in civic issues, leading to better quality decision-making. In turn quality processes and outcomes improve people's faith in the practice of public relations.

The second most significant failure in the case study was the lack of attention created by the campaign. It is believed that if the campaign had attracted more attention, then more people would have participated in the campaign leading to a more effective campaign in terms of more statistically significant results. While this would give more confidence to decision-makers and observers, the water review team was satisfied that actions such as evaluating existing market research and previous consultation feedback undertaken by any of the councils participating in the review, or their water service providers; and undertaking in-depth facilitated workshops such as the Community Advisory Group series provided a reliable indication of what results could have been expected if more people had participated.

Reasons for not achieving greater attention in the campaign can be put down to a lack of funds and time. More funds would have allowed for significantly more advertising and publicity. The placement of advertisements in the New Zealand Herald, community and suburban newspapers as well as on radio was a significant cost of the campaign. To gain the sort of attention desired, assessments as to reach and frequency and message weight would have needed to be made and followed (Bovée, Thill, Dovel & Wood 1995). A wider variety of advertising mediums may also have been chosen. Further funds could have been used to provide for more staff to undertake workshops and meetings with target publics. Additional funds would also have allowed for better quality materials to be produced, for example factsheets could have been printed, assembled in packs and distributed in volume to a wider range of target publics.

A longer timeframe would have allowed for advertising to be continued for a longer period of time, and provided more opportunity for workshops and meetings. The timeframe for the consultation submission period could have been extended, although it is debatable what the optimum amount of time for a consultation periods is. If too much time is allowed, participants sometimes delay responding and then end up not making a submission at all.

Attracting more attention to the campaign would have also created the required flow on effects for the relevancy and persuasion principles. However, relevance in the campaign could have been enhanced by further analysing how issues addressed by the review could impact on individual target audiences, for example, statistics relating to water use by older adults could have been compared to water use of an extended family. Achieving better results in these two areas would have enhanced the persuasiveness of the campaign.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MODEL IDENTIFIED BY THE CASE STUDY

The CPE model in its current form evaluates communication campaigns using qualitative assessment. This leaves the assessment open to criticism that the results of the analysis are subjective rather than objective, or open to interpretation. It could be argued that if the CPE model relied on quantitative assessment, the results would be more consistent and comparable, and this would provide a more stable method for assessing the effectiveness and ethics of persuasive communication.

The fact that the model does use qualitative assessment suggests that it is more useful for evaluating campaigns after they have been implemented. However, it is argued here that the principles of the CPE model do provide key focal points for the design stages of communication campaigns. This being said, the model itself does not prescribe how good results can be achieved in campaigns. For example, the model does not specify how many stakeholders constitute a forum for debate. This would also vary depending of the circumstances of each particular campaign.

DISCUSSION

The case study demonstrates that the model is a useful tool for assessing ethical persuasive communication. The framework for the model is based on key themes identified in the literature and summarised in Chapter Five. From these themes, twelve principles were identified (attention; comprehension; relevance; persuasiveness; proposal; freedom of choice; ethical behaviour; change of state; forum for debate; accuracy, truth and transparency; fairness and equity; and long-term consideration), which provided a framework for analysing communication campaigns in a qualitative form. These are criteria for effective, ethical persuasive communication. The literature and the ensuing model therefore demonstrate how communication can be both persuasive and ethical.

The CPE model highlights where a communication campaign has failed to achieve what it should have, in order to be considered ethical persuasive communication. This was illustrated in the Water Review case study, where the campaign failed to achieve sufficient attention, relevance, persuasiveness, a forum for debate, fairness and equity, and long-term consideration.

Given that the model seeks to guide ethical communication, the ethics stage of the model is possibly the most important. In addition, discussion of the literature in Chapters Four and Five has highlighted the fact that involving more people or viewpoints in public debate is the most significant indicator of ethical communication. It is obvious then, based on the comments of industry spectators (Stauber & Rampton 1995, Bivins 1993) that this seldom occurs in current practice. For this reason, the forum for debate principle is considered the most important within the CPE model. Furthermore, the importance of this principle has necessitated the development of a new communications model – the multi-sided communication approach, which expresses more clearly than existing two-way model of communication, the expression of competing viewpoints in the public domain, and the role of the public relations practitioner in that setting.

CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSIONS ON ETHICS IN PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

Mayhew (1997) argues that in today's society the New Public does not provide well for the rational discourse that is required for the participation of citizens in civic life. In researching this thesis, it was hoped that an answer could be found that would show how communicators could create forums that allow for ethical, multi-sided discourse between citizens. When assessed against the CPE model, based on the literature discussed in earlier chapters, this has been achieved.

This thesis brings together two similar fields of study – communication and persuasion. An inherent link between the two has been demonstrated, showing that all communication is persuasive (Strong & Cook 1992; Larson 1998), and that persuasion is achieved through the process of communication (Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg 2000). Furthermore, it is how this process of communication is managed that indicates whether this has been done ethically or not (Mulholland 1994). If the communication has not been ethical, then it ceases to be persuasive and is instead coercive, manipulative or propagandist (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990; Larson 1998).

The management of communication that is persuasive introduces the notion that communication practitioners, as managers of communication, have the ability to influence public opinion (Motion & Leitch 1996). The discussion of public relations theory illustrates more clearly that level of influence, and when read in conjunction with a discussion of public opinion and public discourse, it is easy to see how public relations has earned a reputation for being unethical (Ewen 1996; Stauber & Rampton 1995; Mayhew 1997).

DELIVERING ETHICS THROUGH A MULTI-SIDED APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION

In a pluralistic society where many voices are disadvantaged and remain unheard, and communication messages compete with each other for attention, public discourse can be compromised. Public relations has often exacerbated the gap between information rich and information poor; or amplified the voice of those with power and influence (Stauber & Rampton 1995; Hagar & Burton 1999) at the expense of those without.

This thesis has proposed a new approach to communication – a multi-sided approach, which seeks to redress the imbalance in public discourse. This multi-sided approach includes or makes explicit the notions of the public domain and the wide variety of competing voices that can be a part of the public discourse. This approach builds on traditional two-way symmetrical models of communication (Grunig 1992), and suggests or necessitates a different role for the public relations practitioner.

However, while this role may seem radically different, it is argued here that this style of public relations has more chance of delivering communication that is effective and ethical. This approach is embodied in the CPE model that has been developed, and the analysis of the case study, which the model was used to assess, demonstrates how campaigns can be evaluated against this approach.

The multi-sided approach to communication drives both effectiveness and ethics. Effectiveness is achieved because persuasive communication that encourages and allows for better quality discussion of issues produces better outcomes for all participants. Ethics is achieved because more public debate is allowed for, and free expression balances the traditional power holders.

A MODEL OF PERSUASIVE AND ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Drawing on key theories and principles discussed in this thesis, a framework for ethical persuasive communication has been developed and proposed as a way of achieving balanced public debate through ethical persuasive communication. The CPE model (see Chapter Five) nominates a list of criteria for the three different stages of the model – Communication, Persuasion and Ethics (CPE). These criteria build on what it is deemed to be the principles of effective communication and ethical persuasion, providing a framework for evaluating communication campaigns either before or after their implementation.

It is believed that the CPE model assesses the extent to which communication is effective in terms of the attention, comprehension, and relevance it creates as well as the persuasiveness it ultimately leads to.

The model demonstrates persuasiveness in communication by including a proposal, providing the receiver with the opportunity to accept or reject the proposal, requiring ethical behaviour on the part of the public relations practitioner and the interests they serve, and finally leading to a change in state of the receiver's beliefs, attitudes or behaviour.

The model evaluates the ethical nature of the persuasive communication by requiring the communications practitioner to provide a fair forum for debate; accuracy, truth and transparency; fairness and equity for those presenting differing points of view; as well as a professional responsibility to undertake communication that is not only in the best long-term interest of those involved, but also in the interest of the public relations profession itself.

The framework for the model was based on the following conclusions drawn from communication and persuasion theory discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, and summarised in Chapter Five:

1. **Communication is a persuasive process.**

   The literature states that all communication is persuasive, and that persuasion is put into effect through communication (Strong & Cook 1992; Larson 1998; O'Keefe 1990). The Water Review case study illustrated this because, although it was primarily an information and consultation campaign, people were persuaded to participate in the campaign by making a submission.

2. **Communication creates influence and a corresponding ethical duty.**

   Both academic theorists and current day spectators all comment on the power communication has to influence people (Perloff 1993; Lowery & De Fleur 1983; Mayhew 1997; Larson 1998). These observations usually reflect the ethical nature of this influence. The CPE model interprets this as a need for ethical behaviour.

3. **Analysing the audience is essential for effective communication.**

   Communication and persuasion theory both examine what constitutes 'effective' communication, and while many differing opinions are offered, it can be concluded that success, or effectiveness, is more likely to occur if the communication is designed based on the target audience (Klapper 1960). The literature has shown that analysing the audience will help to develop communication that gains attention, highlights relevance to the audience, and increases comprehension of an issue.

4. **Persuasion by definition is ethical – it includes the notion of freedom of choice.**

   Overwhelmingly persuasion theory distinguishes persuasion from other forms of communication (propaganda, rhetoric) by the fact that persuasive communication gives the receiver the choice to accept or reject the persuasive proposal (Perloff 1993; O'Keefe 1990; Larson 1998). In the case of the Water Review, there was no legal requirement or otherwise for people to participate.

5. **The aim of managed communication is to effect self-persuasion in the receiver.**

   Many persuasion theorists regard self-persuasion as the most effective and desirable form of persuasion (Tesser 1978 and Janis & King 1956 in Petty & Cacioppo 1996). Effective, because the audience or receiver has convinced them self of the proposal by 'learning' the arguments presented. Desirable, because it is the audience/receiver that has persuaded them self, rather than the sender who may be seen as trying to manipulate them.

6. **Persuasion requires a proposal (a communication message) aimed at achieving a change of state.**

   A clear argument or proposal needs to be stated in order for people to be persuaded to change, retain or adopt a certain belief, attitude or behaviour (Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1963; Skinner 1938). Even though the Water Review did not seek to persuade people to adopt a certain option, it still contained a clear proposal stating that the industry needed reform and that feedback was being sought on the best options for this.

7. **Ethical behaviour in persuasive communication requires accuracy, truth and transparency.**

   Communication theorists suggest that accuracy, truth and transparency are important ethical traits that should be adhered to by public relations practitioners (Baker & Martinson 2002). However, these are not a guarantee of ethical outcomes on their own as was shown in the Water Review. While the communications material was accurate, truthful and transparent, other ethical criteria were not met.

8. **Creating and influencing public opinion in an ethical manner required a fair and equitable forum for debate – multi-sided communication.**

   This is the key principle of the CPE model and is based on a realisation that two-way communication models do not create the level of public debate that the public, spectators and some public relations practitioners see as appropriate. The proposed multi-sided communication model underpins the principle of a forum for debate, which requires practitioners to ensure that all viewpoints of an issue are represented in the public domain in order for informed public debate to occur (Bivins 1993). Central to this principle, and creating a formidable challenge for the public relations industry, is the idea that fairness and equity must be provided to those representing differing viewpoints.

9. **An ethical approach to persuasive communication is better in terms of public discourse and the overall effectiveness of the public relations industry over the long-term.**
   Industry commentators suggest that adopting the kind of ethical approach represented in the CPE model would lead to better outcomes for the public or stakeholders but also for the public relations industry itself (Kruckeberg 2000; Bivins 1993), as its enhanced reputation would see public relations playing a more effective and valuable role in public discourse.

SUMMING UP

Organisations need goodwill to draw upon - to do that "an organisation must operate ethically, communicate effectively, and prove itself sensitive (and, when necessary, responsive) to community needs and aspirations" (Tymson & Sherman: 1990: 5).

The integrity of public relations is often questioned, and it is suggested that the role of public relations practitioners is unethical, and serves only the interests of those that the practitioner represents (Mayhew 1997; Achbar 1998; Stauber & Rampton 1995; Ewen 1996; Comrie 2002; Hager & Burton 1999). Debate around improving the ethics of public relations ranges from the provisions of stricter codes of ethics that focus on ethical processes, to consideration of the ethics of the issue or situation (Kruckeberg 2000). Most ethical models suggest that everyone has a right to advocate their own opinion, and that it is up to others to challenge or present dissenting views (Gregory 2002; Martinson 2000). Others argue that it is unethical to use disproportionate power to influence public discourse (Mayhew 1997; Stauber & Rampton 1995).

It is suggested here that existing communication models, such as Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of communication (1992) do not explicitly show the nature of public discourse, and they do not identify the public domain within which managed communication occurs. This thesis proposes that communication models will develop beyond a two-way communication approach to become 'multi-sided communication' (see Figure 4:2). This model shows a less structured and more dynamic process of communication, whereby any group initiates communication in the public domain. It demonstrates that the flow of communication does not always start or end with the public relations practitioner. This multi-sided communication approach suggests that it is the responsibility of the practitioner to encourage and create the climate for different viewpoints to be articulated in the public domain. This approach is consistent with the responsibility Bivins (1993) places on public relations practitioners if they want to be recognised as an ethical profession.

Presenting more than one side of an argument, particularly in the way outlined in the multi-sided communication model, helps to create a balanced share of power in communication. This helps to achieve a forum for debate in the public domain, as well as ensuring that information is accurate, truthful and transparent; and it also helps to improve the long-term relationship between an organisation/public relations practitioner and the public.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY

Benefits: What Benefit Does An Effective, Ethical Approach Give?

This thesis supports the view that public relations practitioners, as managers of communication, influence public opinion and therefore have an obligation to serve the public interest and, by doing so, improve the quality of public debate and reputation and performance of the public relations industry (Kruckeberg 2000; Bivins 1993).

Establishing the ability of the community to unite in an integrative way is a key consideration for Mayhew (1997), and it is suggested here that public relations practitioners have a role to play in achieving this. While Mayhew argues that the way the 'New Public' operates has made public debate more difficult, the CPE model offers a way for public discourse to be improved. The model offers a different way for the public relations industry to operate, and in so doing, creates the potential for wider public debate and participation in civic issues.

Seemingly this would increase the quality of public discourse, better serving the public's interests; and decrease the mistrust of the public relations industry, thereby improving the integrity of the industry and those that practise in it.

Challenges: What Will Make Ethical Persuasive Communication Difficult To Achieve?

It is obvious from the shortcomings of the case study, that the model highlights difficult aspects of ethical persuasive communication. In particular the principles of creating a forum for debate and fairness and equity pose a question as to who is to assist competing or differing views to be presented in the public domain. It is not current practice for public relations practitioners, or more accurately, their clients or employers to provide this assistance. Solving this problem is an area that needs further research.

Traditional challenges of creating 'effective' communication, and managing time and resource constraints also remain important areas of study. These constraints will continue to reduce the effectiveness of managed communication and also the ethics of that communication, as it is unlikely that the ethical principles within the CPE model can be met if the communication or persuasion principles cannot be met first.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY – HELP OR HINDRANCE?

The conclusions drawn in this thesis, and the development of the CPE model have demonstrated that it is possible for communication to be managed ethically, and that public relations practitioners, as managers of communication, have the ability to act ethically. A framework for ethical persuasive communication that creates balanced public debate has been formulated and tested. It can therefore be stated that the public relations industry has the potential to help rather than hinder public discourse, by positively influencing public opinion through fostering public debate in the public domain. Whether individual practitioners choose to take this philanthropic approach of 'helping' is another matter entirely.

From the discussion and literature presented, we can conclude that effective persuasive communication can be ethical. While it may not be common practice currently, it can be seen that the application of the CPE model and multi-sided communication approach would aid those developing managed communication campaigns to consider more carefully how communication campaigns influence public debate.

This thesis has focused on the struggle that public relations practitioners face to improve and prove the value and integrity of the work they do in facilitating public discourse. The key to this seems to be, to acknowledge the persuasive nature of the communication practitioners manage, and to then provide a standard of ethics that they can be judged against. Multi-sided communication and the CPE model offer an important guide with which public relations practitioners can improve their performance. This will improve the quality of public debate, better meet the public's interest, and improve the reputation and practice of public relations itself – indeed, public relations can be a help rather than a hindrance.

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