Local Government-Citizen Relationships: Using the coorientation approach to analyze relationship effectivness

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband, Drew, for his unwavering support and to my children, Conner, Will, James and Annie who gave me the courage and inspiration to fulfill this dream.

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ABSTRACT

One of the current debates in public relations scholarship surrounds how to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of public relations practitioners and programs and the value they add to an organization. Known as the ROI, or return on investment, in public relations, this concept is often hard to define. However, as management demands become stronger for more accountability from public relations departments, the need to effectively address this concern continues to grow. Previous research has shown that a strong indicator of the effectiveness of public relations is the relationship that exists between an organization and its publics.

This study details the relationship between local governments and the citizens they serve. Specifically, it analyzes the different aspects of the relationship and the public relations activities and tactics used to promote and foster relationship development. The research method utilized included the perspectives of both the organization and the public in assessing the organization-public relationship by combining the coorientational approach advocated by Broom (1977) and Broom and Dozier (1990) with the relationship measures proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999) and the tenets of the J.Grunig's (1989) situational theory of publics.

Using online survey data collected from more than 300 local government officials from municipalities across the United States and more than 300 citizens with various demographic and geographic backgrounds, this research examined the relationship dimensions of control mutuality, trust commitment, and satisfaction. In addition, the study evaluated the communication behaviors of citizens to obtain information to guide

local government communicators in message development and strategy and also to determine the issues and tactics that will be most effective.

Results indicate that citizens have a neutral view of the local government-citizen relationship, and local government officials view it more favorably. Furthermore, higher problem recognition, lower constraint recognition, and higher levels of involvement were positively associated with more active communication behaviors of citizens. Findings from the coorientation analysis illustrate that the two groups are in disagreement about the relationship. Dissensus exists between local government officials and citizens; that is, local government officials and citizens are in disagreement, and both parties know they are in disagreement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....1

Purpose and Importance of Study.....5

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....8

Public Relations Role in the Public Sector.....8

The Beginnings of PR's Role in the Public Sector.....8

Public Relations and the Promotion of Democracy.....10

PR in the Public Sector and the Impact of 9/11.....13

Government Public Relations.....14

The Government-Citizen Relationship.....16

Measuring the Government-Citizen Relationship.....18

Situational Theory of Publics.....23

Coorientation and the Coorientational Approach.....31

CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....43

Study Design.....43

Pilot Study.....46

Pilot Study Method.....47

Data Analysis Procedures for Pilot Study.....48

Results of Pilot Study.....49

Conclusions from Pilot Study.....51

Pilot Study Evaluation.....52

Main Study.....53

Populations and Samples……...53

Local Governments……54

Citizens……..55

Instrument Design.....55

Relationship Dimensions……...57

Communication Behaviors…….…58

Data Analysis Procedures.....60

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....64

Data Analysis Preparation.....64

Scale Reliability…….…65

Sample Demographics……...65

Local Government Sample……....65

Local Citizens Sample……..…….67

Results of Research Questions and Hypothesis Testing.....67

Research Question 1……..67

Research Question 2……..68

Hypothesis 1……...68

Hypothesis 2……...70

Hypothesis 3……...71

Hypothesis 4……...72

Hypothesis 5……...72

Research Question 3……..73

Research Question 4……..74

Research Question 5……..76

Research Question 6……..76

Research Question 7……..77

Research Question 8……..78

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....87

Discussion of Results…….87

Evaluations of the Government-Citizen Relationship……..…….87

Communication Behaviors of Citizens……..96

Coorientation State Evaluations……...106

Theoretical Implications……..109

Relationship Management Theory……...…110

Situational Theory of Publics……...……112

Limitations……...113

REFERENCES.....117

APPENDICES…….141

Appendix A: Relationship Measures.....142

Appendix B: Communication Behaviors……...……..143

Appendix C: Pilot Test Survey……..…….…145

Appendix D: Local Government Official Survey……149

Appendix E: Citizen Survey……153

VITA……162

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions……39

Table 2-2. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions with Variables Identified…….....……41

Table 3-1. Pilot Study: One-Way ANOVA on Evaluation of the Citizen Relationship with their Local Government Based on Gender……51

Table 4-1 Presentation of Findings……...…….65

Table 4-2. Cronbach's alpha values of the organization-public relationship Dimensions……68

Table 4-3. Demographic Characteristics of Local Government Officials……70

Table 4-4. Demographic Characteristics of Citizens……73

Table 4-5. Local Citizen Direct Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions……77

Table 4-6. Importance of Community issues……....79

Table 4-7. Local Government Officials and Citizen Direct Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions……...87

Table 4-8. Local Citizen Meta- Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions……89

Table 4-9. Local Government Official Meta- Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions……...…….89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: Newcomb's (1953) ABX model……..…43

Figure 2-2. Representation of the coorientational model of organization-public relationships (adapted from Broom & Dozier (1990)…….……..……..49

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The role of public relations within organizations remains a point of vibrant debate for industry practitioners and academics alike. Of major concern for public relations practitioners is identifying and communicating what their efforts are worth to their organizations (Campbell, 1993; Hon, 1997; Johnson, 1994). In the past, executives often viewed public relations as a necessary function of the company, but one that they did not completely understand because few people knew how to measure its impact on achieving organizational goals (Campbell, 1993). Documenting the effectiveness of public relations practitioners and campaigns is extremely important since the marketplace demands that companies become more efficient, and company executives are demanding greater accountability from their public relations departments (Johnson, 1994; Lindenmann, 1988; Tortorello & Dewgiallo, 1990). Defining the return on investment (ROI) of public relations activities and functions in organizations is an important issue and one that is currently receiving much attention (Likely & Watson, 2013).

Previous public relations research has stressed that a strong indicator of the effectiveness of public relations is the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). After many years of research to answer the question of how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness, Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) developed the following proposition:

> Public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This

> contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public relations contributes to the effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies (p. 86).

This proposition espouses the definition of public relations proposed by public relations scholar, Scott Cutlip, that says public relations is a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994).

This study addresses the public relations activities of governments focusing on the effectiveness of public relations initiatives to foster and create relationships. It is presumed that a specific goal for utilizing public relations in governments should be to strengthen relations with stakeholders, particularly citizens. Simply residing in a community makes citizens primary stakeholders for governments, and consequently places them in the government-citizen relationship. Evaluating the role of citizens, as a group that does not choose to be a public of government yet is one by virtue of living in a community, provides insightful information for advancement of relationship theories. In government public relations, citizens become the source of both opportunities and challenges of an effective government-citizen relationship. In a community, many different types of citizens with varying levels of involvement, knowledge, and interest in their local government exist, and this makes it difficult for public relations practitioners working in government to know the best tools and messages strategies to use in developing communication campaigns. Alternately, once the most effective

communication channels are determined, local governments can use them to build and strengthen relationships with their citizens.

In his review of the literature on organization-public relationships, Ledingham (2003) summarized the relational perspective by suggesting a theory of relationship management that states, "effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics" (p. 90). Ledingham's (2003) perspective acknowledges that public relations not only is a communication function but also uses strategic communication to manage relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

An area of organization-public relationship research that has received scant scholarly attention is the relationship between governments and citizens. Kruckeberg and Starck (2000) argue that community is achieved "when people are aware of and interested in common ends and regulate their activities in view of those ends" (p. 145). They further suggest, "public relations is best defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community" (p. 145). Ledingham (2001) tested this thesis to see if and how public relations techniques can help build community and found that when shared interests are the basis for public relations initiatives grounded in a commitment to mutual benefit and when those initiatives are designed to accommodate differing interests, community can be the result.

This research evaluates the quality of the relationship between governments and citizens by using established relationship measures (Hon & Grunig, 1999) within a

coorientational framework. The direct perspective of citizens regarding the quality of the relationship is measured as well as the direct perspective of the local government officials about the quality of the relationship. This analysis is different from most analyses of the organization-public relationship that capture only the opinions of the public or of the organization. In addition, this research looks at the meta-perspectives of each party (i.e. what one party believes the other thinks about the relationship). Analyzing the relationship in this way is drawn from relational perception theory (Laing, 1969) that suggests individuals in a relationship influence each other in their interactions and that those interactions draw on three different perspectives (Laing, 1969). The first is the direct perspective—what an individual in the relationship thinks. Next is the meta-perspective, which is what the individual in the relationship thinks the other person thinks. The third perspective is the meta-meta-perspective, or how a person thinks his or her direct perspective is perceived by another. According to relational perspective theory, the greater the degree of accuracy between the various perspectives of the parties in the relationship, the better the individuals will understand each other and feel they are being understood, which leads to healthier relationships (Laing, 1969).

This research also provides an opportunity to explore the situational theory of publics within the relational framework. As Aldoory (2001) and Aldoory and Sha (2007) note, more research is needed that evaluates and recognizes publics' views within the public relations process. The situational theory of publics asserts that the more active a public is in its communication behavior, the more likely it is to evaluate the organization-public relationship positively (Grunig, 1982). The situational theory of publics was

developed by James Grunig (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) to address the changing nature of publics and to predict their communication behaviors. Situational theory outlines the method that allows public relations practitioners to identify which issues related to their organizations are of greatest concern to their constituencies. To more effectively evaluate the relationship between a local government and its citizens, it is important to determine the types of issues that are most salient in the minds of publics. Furthermore, this deeper understanding of publics will enable organizations to strategically tailor their public relations activities so that they can have the largest reach and impact.

Purpose and Importance of Study

This study details the relationship between local governments and the citizens they serve. Specifically, it analyzes the different aspects of the relationship and the public relations activities and tactics used to promote and foster relationship development. Unlike previous approaches, this proposal outlines a method that will include the perspectives of both the organization and the public in assessing the organization-public relationship by combining the coorientational approach advocated by Broom (1977) and Broom and Dozier (1990) with the relationship measures proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999) and the tenets of the Grunig's (1989) situational theory of publics. The coorientation model is based on the premise that the communicator's communication style and content with the receiver depends in large part on the communicator's perception of the attitudes and perspectives held by the other (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Applying these relationship measures within the coorientational framework will reveal the degree of agreement, accurate perception, and perception of

perceived agreement (congruency) between governments and their citizens when assessing relationship dimensions. Measuring the relationship between local governments and their citizens in this manner moves beyond the commonly used measures in public relations of measuring outputs and outcomes. Furthermore, knowledge about the beliefs, attitudes, values, and lifestyles of audiences is a key component in successful public relations (Wilcox, Cameron, Reber, & Shin, 2011). These results will inform the tailoring of messages that resonate more strongly with stakeholders. Audience research is done so that we can make sense of audience fragmentation, confirm or disprove assumptions, prevent unintended effects, and guide the message development and strategy. Therefore, it is important to analyze how citizens respond to local government issues and the types of communication strategies and tactics they find effective.

This research will add to the existing literature on organization-public relationships using coorientational framework evaluated from the government-citizen perspective, which has been under-researched. Additionally, this study provides further opportunity to test Hon and Grunig's (1999) indices for relationship measurement in the local government-citizen setting that needs more scholarly attention. Specifically, it will look at trust, satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, and the perceptions of each from the perspective of both local governments and citizens. Furthermore, the research evaluates the role communication behaviors of citizens' plays in the government-citizen relationship.

The primary significance of this research is the contributions it will make to public relations theory. This study will advance and extend relationship management theory through the inclusion of the variables used in the situational theory of publics. Specifically it will look at the impact of communication behavior of citizens and public officials on the government-citizen relationship. An additional aim of the research is to further the theoretical understanding of relationship management and publics and to make practical suggestions for how governments can improve their relationships with citizens.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States, local governments were created to enable a grassroots approach to democracy by allowing citizens the opportunity to participate in a political process that directly impacts their quality of living and where elected officials represent the needs of the citizens and are responsive to their issues (Rosenbloom, 1998). Therefore, researching local governments is particularly useful since it is the local level of government where citizens often feel the most direct access and potential importance in governance. This chapter reviews the role of public relations in the public sector, relationship management, and the importance of identifying and targeting publics. Before exploring the relationship management paradigm in public relations, government public relations is discussed as well as the evolution of the study within the public relations context from relationship dimensions. Subsequently, the theoretical concepts behind the situational theory of publics and their applicability to the operations of organizations are covered. Finally, this chapter explores how these concepts have been measured in previous studies and details how this study's research questions and hypotheses will further test relationship management within the bounds of the government-citizen relationship.

Public Relations Role in the Public Sector

The beginnings of PR's role in the public sector

Within the public relations discipline, the specific function of public affairs is often defined as community relations or governmental relations, where professionals

working in these positions work with officials in the community and with legislative groups and special interest groups to educate them about the policies and programs government implements on their behalf (Newsom, Scott & Turk, 1997, p. 7-8). History notes that public administrators made use of public affairs as far back 1829, when President Andrew Jackson appointed the first press secretary, Amos Kendall, to serve in his administration. Kendall was a former journalist and editor and performed nearly all of the White House public relations tasks including writing speeches, sending official press releases and messages, drafting state papers, and conducting opinion polls (McKinnon, Tedesco & Lauder, 2005). Woodrow Wilson was the first president to hold regular press conferences and made public relations activities a large part of his administration (Maltese, 1994). President Wilson instituted the Committee on Public Information eight days after America entered World War I and selected George Creel, who is now considered a pioneer within the public relations industry, to chair the institute (Maltese, 1994). The Committee on Public Information was created to "coordinate the flow of government news about the war and to rally public support for American intervention in the European conflict" (Maltese, 1994, p. 7).

During President Theodore Roosevelt's administration, Roosevelt attempted to gain support for his programs by utilizing a network of publicity experts and publications designed to influence members of Congress (Seitel, 1998). In opposition to this practice, in 1913, the House of Representatives introduced the Gillett Amendment of 1913 to an appropriations bill stipulating that money for publicity could not be spent by federal agencies unless approved by Congress (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Seitel, 1998).

This amendment specified that government funds could not be used to pay for publicity unless specifically earmarked for that purpose (McKinnon, Tedesco & Lauder, 2005). Several years later, Congress prohibited using appropriated services, messages, or propaganda by passing the gag law (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1996).

Nevertheless, succeeding presidents continue to use public relations strategies to communicate with their publics. According to Baskin, Aronoff, and Lattimore (1996), President Herbert Hoover was the first to have an official press secretary on his staff. Furthermore, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the White House Press Office as part of his New Deal initiative, and during World War II he created the Office of War Information to simplify the information distribution of federal agencies (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1996). After the war ended, the office became the United States Information Agency (USIA) (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1996). The need to have strong public relations initiatives trickled down to the states, and by 1949, nearly every state had established a state-supported public relations program to attract tourism and industry (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1996).

Public relations and the promotion of democracy

The importance of widely distributed and accessible government information in a democratic society remains the foundation of the American republic. The right to access government information has long been viewed as essential to participation in the democratic process, trust in government, and accuracy in government, among other essential functions (Cullier & Piotrowski, 2009). The issue of making government actions and activities more open and transparent received much attention and debate

following the impeachment of President Richard Nixon (Tea Party Patriots, 2012). The goal of transparency was formalized in 1966 with the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Even within the historical context of promoting access to government information, the legislative branch of government was far more enthused about FOIA than the executive branch (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). "No agency or department supported the legislation, and the president signed it into law with no small amount of reluctance," when Congress passed the FOIA (Relyea, 2009, p. 314). The United States became the first nation with a law guaranteeing a legal right to request government information as a result of FOIA (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010).

The use of information technologies to transform U.S. government and aid its ability to provide more open and transparent government operations has been ongoing since the late 1960s. In a June 1968 memo that was a precursor to the many executive orders issued by presidents in the recent decades regarding information technologies and federal agency practices, President Lyndon Johnson compelled the heads of federal agencies to use computers to "do a better job" (Johnson, 1966). While President Johnson's vision for the use of computers and information technologies was narrower, President Bill Clinton's administration sought transformational change through the use of new information technologies making government officials and information more accessible. Vice-President Al Gore in his Reinventing Government Initiative led this effort.

In 1993, Vice-President Al Gore introduced the National Performance Review (NPR) that outlined a new customer service approach to government that argued that the

new “information superhighways” were to be the mainstay for government of the future (Dawes, Pardo, & Dicaterino, 1999, p. 346.). This was to be supported by the creation of a National Information Infrastructure (NII) that would ensure economic prosperity (Gore, 1993; Owen & Davis, 2008). In addition to the NPR, Gore’s Reinventing Government movement attempted to change the way the Federal government conducted its business. One of the main changes was the reliance on new technologies for government operations. A fundamental component was the creation of interagency websites that would be capable of providing federal government information and many services through single websites (Fountain, 2007). The transformative abilities of this initiative held great promise but ultimately failed because of the lack of oversight processes for cross agency technological initiatives.

The transformation in technology also brought about reforms that established early federal web and information management practices and policy. A few of the key Clinton administration policy documents including the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, and OMB Circular A-130 contained provisions requiring agencies to strategically use information technology to carry out their missions (Fletcher and Westerback, 1999, p.299). Two other primary pieces of legislation were passed extending the principles of freedom of information into digital and online information. First, the 1996 Electronic Freedom of Information Act (EFOIA) extended public information access to include electronic information and instructed agencies to use the Internet to provide basic information about their operations (Halstuk and Chamberlin, 2001). In addition, the Government Paperwork Elimination

Act of 1998 was passed requiring agencies to make electronic forms of agencies available online (Relyea, 2009). The USDA was the first federal agency to engage in online dialogue with the public when it solicited comments from the public online for a proposed rule about definitions for organic foods in 1997 (Shea & Garson, 2010). Also, President Clinton delivered the first Internet address to the public on his firstgov.gov (now usa.gov) website, which was a portal for all of the federal government websites (Fletcher, 2002). These actions were key in establishing the foundation for making government more open and transparent and promoting e-democracy.

Public Relations in the public sector and the impact of 9/11

In spite of the United States' position as the pioneer in government transparency and openness, government leaders have not always practiced theses ideals and several have actively worked to restrict openness and transparency. After the tremendous information management changes of the 1990s in expanding public access to government information, the attacks of September 11, 2001, changed the culture of information management in the federal government. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, many agencies including NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Energy took information deemed to be sensitive off of their public websites (Halchin, 2002). In the years following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration employed a restrictive approach to transparency and information access. During the Bush administration, requests for access to information were frequently ignored, FOIA requests were not acknowledged, and members of the President's cabinet and advisors refused to testify before or speak to Congressional Committees (Relyea & Halchin, 2003).

Additionally, former Attorney General John Ashcroft, who served under President Bush from 2001 to 2005, issued a directive that instructed agencies to withhold information when possible (Gup, 2007). After years of policy progress in terms of transparency practices of government, agencies began developing new categories for the classification of information that was outside the FOIA (Feinberg, 2004).

It was during this restrictive information management environment that Congress passed the E-government Act (2002). The overall goal of the E-government Act was to make government information and services online more accessible and citizen-centered and to improve the efficiency of the federal government (Seifert, 2008). One of the primary features of the Act was the creation of the Office of Electronic Government that was responsible for carrying out a variety of information resource management activities. This office was to assist information technology personnel in federal agencies with enforcing the compliance with relevant policy statutes. In spite of these efforts to foster institutional change in the federal government to utilize fully information technologies and to make government information and activities more open and transparent, the 2009 Report to Congress on the E-government Act begins with the following surprising statement: "Twenty years ago, people working for the federal government had access to the world's best technology. Today, many government employees have better technology at home than at work" (OMB, 2009).

Government public relations

Public relations scholars are beginning to research the relationship between the need for greater transparency and the role that public relations plays in meeting that need.

Government has been viewed as significantly different from other organizations in terms of its role and purpose in society (Appleby, 2007). Government public relations focuses on the use of public relations by public institutions and agencies in an effort to achieve institutional goals and advance their missions (Grunig, 2008). Government public relations can be best understood as a management function and relationship builder and as a tool to increase the efficiency of communication for an organization (Cutlip, et al, 2006). According to Liu and Horsley (2007), government public relations is much different from that of the private sector. They identify eight constraints and opportunities that make government public relations unique. The constraints and opportunities that the public sector environment creates are: politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for public relations practitioners, poor public perception of government communication, lagging professional development, and federalism (Liu & Horsley, 2007). Therefore, evaluating and managing public relations initiatives in government are more challenging, yet necessary. Furthermore, conforming to the rules of transparency and public information access is essential in government public relations and provides instrumental utility as well as relationship building. Taking all of these factors into consideration along with the complexity and uniqueness regarding government public relations makes managing the quality of the local government-citizen relationship essential, but difficult.

Still, no definitive research has focused on the perception of government public relations efforts from the perspective of citizens. In fact, much of the scholarship related

to public relations and government centers around politics (McKinnon, Tedesco, & Lauder, 2005), the media (Jamieson, 1996, 1992), and public opinion (Ewen, 1996).

Communicators who have worked in government often note that developing communication strategies for government organizations is different than in business or non-profit organizations. However, Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) propose that while the general principles are the same for all organizations, "the specific conditions to which the principles must be applied are different." In this era of increased government scrutiny and mistrust by citizens, an area that must be addressed for effective government public relations is transparency. Transparency is defined as the availability of information on matters of public concern, the ability of citizens to participate in political decision-making, and the accountability of government to public opinion (Cotterrell, 1999). According to Piotrowski (2007), governmental transparency allows the public to develop a more accurate picture of what is happening in government, which allows citizens to hold governments accountable and evaluate performances of government agencies.

Relationship Management

Relationship management is at the core or public relations. In 1984, Ferguson presented a review of public relations research for the past nine years and insisted that:

> The unit of study [of public relations research] should not be the organization, nor the public, nor the communication process [but] rather, the unit of study should be the relationship between an organization and its publics (p. ii).

A review of current literature reveals that there is no single definition of relationship that is widely accepted. Interpersonal communication literature says relationships exist

between two or more people when there is a link between them that mutually serves a purpose over a period of time (Coombs, 2001). For a relationship to exist, both parties need to be aware of the other and their interactions as well as to understand it as a two-way process. Ledingham and Bruning (2000) describe relationships, as they relate to public relations, as being the "state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either party impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (p. 160). Expanding on this definition, Broom, Casey, & Ritchey (2000) went further and proposed a specific definition of the organization-public relationship as:

> Organization- public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities of the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization-public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time (p. 18).

The relational characteristics that are essential for a relationship to exist need to be considered in order to describe the organization- public relationship. One of the primary characteristics is transparency. Transparency is extremely important for organization-public relationships and can be viewed as a prerequisite for other relational elements such as trust and commitment (Jahansoozi, 2006). Transparency is necessary for publics to trust that ethical practices and decision-making are occurring in organizations.

According to Kruckeberg and Starck (1998), community is achieved "when people are aware of and interested in common ends and regulate their activity in view of those ends" (p.52). Kruckeberg also suggests "public relations are best defined and practiced as an active attempt to restore and maintain its sense of community" (Kruckeberg, 2000, p. 145). The responsibility for building community by sharing information that allows for more transparent governance is typically the responsibility of public affairs, public information, and communication officials in government. These individuals have the obligation to keep citizens informed and increase awareness of government activities. By facilitating transparent communication initiatives, they are, in turn, improving agency performance and accountability (Garnett, 1997). Balkin (1999) identified three types of transparency that "work together but are analytically different" (p. 393): informational, participatory, and accountability. Transparency efforts of organizations, including governments, need all three qualities to build and restore trust with various stakeholders and inspire relationship development. Therefore, transparency needs three important elements: information that is truthful, substantial, and useful; participation of stakeholders in identifying the information they need; and objective, balanced reporting of an organization's activities and policies to hold the organization accountable (Rawlins, 2009).

Measuring the Government- Citizen Relationship

In her original call for an inquiry into relationship management in public relations, Ferguson (1984) proposed looking at several dimensions of relationships: dynamic versus static; open versus closed; mutual satisfaction and understanding;

distribution of power; and, levels of agreement. Ferguson also indicated that there are other variables that are useful in describing relationships, including the degree to which each party feels it has control over the relationship, the amount to power possessed by each party in the relationship, and the perception of shared goals and understanding, agreement, and consensus. Nearly three decades after Ferguson's call, many of the original dimensions continue to be explored, and over the years several attempts have been made to define precisely how the organization-public relationship should be measured. Ehling (1992) claimed that the shift from strategic communication, which involved the manipulation of public opinion, to the building, nurturing, and maintenance of relationships with stakeholders is at the core of public relations. He called this shift "an important change in the primary mission of public relations" (p.622).

Many studies have sought to expand on the relationship concept further through the identification of various dimensions of the relationship and the testing of scales to measure those dimensions. Two distinct research directions have emerged from these efforts, those following the works of Bruning and Ledingham (1998) and those extending the work created by Hon and Grunig (1999).

The first research direction has moved toward the development of relationship dimensions that classify the types of relationships that exist between an organization and a public. This stream of research begins with Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlinson, and Lesko (1997), who reviewed research from a variety of academic disciplines and suggested that the organization-public relationship could be explored by looking at 17 different dimensions including openness, trust, involvement, investment, and

commitment. These five dimensions were later tested and operationalized by Ledingham and Bruning (1998), who conducted a survey of local telephone subscribers in territories newly opened to competition. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) concluded that an organization-public relationship evaluated using these variables illustrates the value of a quality relationship to an organization's bottom line and could be used to illustrate the effectiveness of public relations. Bruning and Ledingham (1998) then proposed that organization-public relationships could be grouped into three categories: interpersonal relationships, community relationships, and professional relationships. A multi-item, multi-dimensional scale was developed using these categories to measure the organization-public relationship (Bruning and Ledingham, 1999).

Using the Bruning-Ledingham Relationship Scale, Ledingham (2001) assessed the perceptions of relationship quality between community leaders and citizens in a suburb of a major Midwest metropolitan area. The Relationship Scale measures three types of relationships (personal, professional and community) across eight different dimensions (trust, openness, involvement, investment, commitment, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, and mutual understanding). Extending the scale developed by Bruning and Ledingham (1999), Bruning and Galloway (2003) measured the organization-public relationship between customers and their electric service provider. Five underlying dimensions were uncovered for this organization-public relationship through factor analysis. The first dimension refers to the way the organization demonstrated positive human qualities (i.e. trust, transparency) and is labeled anthropomorphism. The second dimension, professional benefits and expectations, presents the publics perceptions of the

professionalism of the organization and expectations about how the organization will behave in the relationship. Personal commitment is the third dimension and is characteristic of wanting to maintain the relationship, feeling linked to the organization and and the desire to maintain the relationship over time. Fourth, the community improvement dimension focuses on the public's perceptions that the organization supports events that are of interest to customers and maintains a commitment to make the community better. The final dimension, comparison of alternatives, represents the publics view of alternative organizations, vis-a-vis, the competition. Using this newly developed scale to look at the city-resident relationship, Bruning, Langenhop, and Green (2004) found that the quality of the relationship significantly influenced citizen's evaluations of their housing experiences.

The second research direction began when Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) proposed that there were seven basic elements to understanding relationship dynamics. Similar to Ferguson's dimensions, they included mutual satisfaction, mutual understanding, and openness. The researchers also added the dimensions of trust, credibility, reciprocity, and mutual legitimacy. Drawing on the interdisciplinary nature of relationship management studies, Hon and Grunig (1999) used interpersonal communication literature to create a list of dimensions that are present in the organization-public relationship. The dimensions they proposed were trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. These dimensions were tested using a convenience sample of the general public for organizations including the American Red Cross, the National Rifle Association, and Microsoft.

Although researchers from both organization-public relationship research directions have created multiple measure to explore the organization-public relationship, the one that appears to have been repeatedly tested more often than the others are those created by Hon and J. Grunig (1999). This scale has been used to study the university-student relationship (Hon and Brunner, 2002; Ki & Hon, 2007), the manufacturer-retailer relationship (Jo, 2006), the municipal utility-community relationship (Hall, 2006), and the nonprofit-donor relationship (Waters, 2007). Since Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) dimensions have proven to be both reliable and valid, this research will use those dimensions and the indicators that measure trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality.

Hon and J. Grunigs's (1999) dimensions reflect dimensions that were also proposed by Bruning and Ledingham (1999); however, Hon and Grunig used literature from other disciplines- marketing, sociology, anthropology and business- to develop their measures. Since they are rooted in various disciplines, it is useful to look at each of the four relationship dimensions in detail. Trust can be defined as an individual's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to another person (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Trust has three subdimensions—integrity, dependability, and competence (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Carnevale, 1995; Daley & Vasu, 1995). Control mutuality is the "degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). Commitment is defined as the extent to which each party believes that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Satisfaction represents the favorable feeling of one party toward the other (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

After many decades of studying relationships using these four dimensions, a framework has been established for evaluating organization-public relationships using valid and reliable scales. Based on the literature on public relations' role in governments and organization-public relationships, this study poses its first research question:

RQ1: How positively do citizens rate local governments on the relationship dimensions?

Situational Theory of Publics

In order to effectively evaluate the effectiveness of public relations efforts, Grunig (1983a) outlined three kinds of knowledge that an organization needs: the contribution that public relations makes to the effectiveness of the organization; the nature of the publics; and, how the nature of a public affects the outcome of program and the effects that different public relations programs can be expected to have (p.28). The situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1983) accounts for a critical aspect of the antecedents for the formation of organization-public relationships. Therefore, communication behaviors of publics are required to initiate and cultivate relationships between publics and organizations. This research seeks to evaluate the role various publics play in the government-citizen relationship as well as the effectiveness of public relations programs by looking at the role of citizens who do not have a choice as to whether or not to be a public for governments- they are a public simply because they reside in a community.

The situational theory of publics gets its name from the belief that the actions of

people are situational in nature and that how they react is dependent on the situation that confronts them. Two classic theories of public opinion by Dewey (1927) and Blumer (1966) improved, refined, and formalized by the situational theory of publics. According to Dewey and Blumer, publics are critical components of the democratic process that recognize problems that affect them and may organize to address or solve such problems. The situational theory of publics was proposed by J. Grunig to "explain when and how people communicate and when communications aimed at people are most likely to be effective" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 148). Grunig's situational theory of publics is considered a cornerstone of modern public relations (Aldoory & Sha, 2007) and predicts differential responses by various stakeholders to issues and communication activities of an organization (Grunig, 1997). In short, it segments publics from the larger population based on the activeness or passiveness of a communication behavior. Because the situational theory of publics has the power to explain and predict who is most likely to communicate based on social or individual problems or issues, it has become an applied communication theory that has been used frequently by both public relations theorists and practitioners (Aldoory & Sha, 2007). Grunig has been developing his situational theory of publics for more than 40 years, and studies by various researchers (Farmer, 1995, J. Grunig, 1983; J. Grunig, 1989; J. Grunig & Childers, 1988; Hamilton, 1992; Major, 1993; Slater, Chipman, Keefe, & Kendall, 1992; Wu, 1992) offer continued support of its utility. Publics are defined as groups of people who communicate similarly about related issues—actively, passively, or not at all (Grunig, 1983). Active publics engage in active communication behaviors by seeking relevant information about issues that concern

them. In contrast, passive publics only process information that relates to issues to which they are concerned and demonstrate passive communication behavior. In public relations research, scholars suggest that active communication behaviors of publics are positively associated with the quality of organization-public relational outcomes (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ferguson, 1984; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Grunig & Hung, 2002). According to Rhee (2004), to form and maintain a solid relationship with an organization, a member of a public needs to have active communication behavior (Rhee, 2004). Reciprocally, an organization is more likely to cultivate quality relationships with these active publics because of potential consequences on the organization's ability to achieve its goals (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

The situational theory of publics helps predict when publics will communicate and when communication messages are most likely to be effective. Publics' communication behaviors are influenced by three independent variables--problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement--and two dependent variables--information seeking and information processing.

Regarding the two dependent variables, J. Grunig (1989) argued communication behavior can be either active or passive. Information-seeking behavior applies to individuals who actively seek out information about an issue. Actively communicating publics seek to understand the information they receive and then use the information to inform their communication behaviors (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Information-processing is more passive communication behavior whereby individuals do not look for information but process random information that they receive. "The members of a public exert less

effort to understand information they process than information they seek. Thus, processed information has fewer communication effects than information that is sought" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 151).

Communications strategy can be guided by the knowledge of the effects that information seeking and information processing have on communication behavior. Grunig explained (1983):

> If a person seeks information, specialized media such as booklets, magazines, newsletters or seminars are most effective. When a person processes information, the most effective media are mass or generalized media which people use when they have available time. Style and creativity are important in facilitating information processing because a message must get a person's attention and keep his interest if he is to process the information. Style and creativity are not as important for information seeking because the person then makes an effort to obtain and understand the message. (p. 12).

Grunig (1992) posited a primary assumption of the situational theory of publics is that active communicators cultivate more understanding, attitudes, and situation-relevant behaviors. The three independent variables-- problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement--depict the understanding individuals have of particular situations and represent the conditions from which publics materialize (Grunig, 1997; Grunig, 1983). Problem recognition references the extent to which individuals recognize a problem facing them and the extent to which people need and elaborate on information (Grunig, 1983). With problem recognition, people do not stop to think about

situations unless they perceive that something needs to be done to improve the situation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Constraint recognition is defined as the extent to which individuals see their behaviors as limited by factors beyond their control (Grunig, 1983). Constraints can be psychological, such as low self-efficacy, which is the conviction that one is capable of executing a behavior required to produce certain outcomes (Witte & Allen, 2000), or physical. The level of involvement is a measure of how personally and emotionally relevant a problem is for an individual (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Involvement increases the likelihood of individuals attending to and comprehending messages (Pavlik, 1988). Dervin (1989) stated that messages are attended to only if the benefits or dangers associated with them have "taken on some kind of personal reality or usefulness for the individual" (p. 68). Previous research indicates that these three independent variables in concert explain communication behavior better than measuring any one of the three independently (Grunig, 1983; Grunig & Childers, 1988).

The situational theory of publics is a highly tested theory (Aldoory & Sha, 2007) and continues to be one of the most frequently used theories in public relations research. This theory has expanded and evolved and a current adaptation of the situational theory of publics is the situational theory of problem solving (STOP) that says that the communication behavior of publics is dependent on the problem or issue at hand. Most of the primary principles of the theory are the same; however, the terminology has changed to more accurately address what is being analyzed by the theory.

Previous research has suggested that the communication behavior of publics is a strong indicator of the organization-public relationship (Ferguson, 1984; Grunig, 1982)

and you need to know the communication behaviors of publics to influence the organization-public relationship. This knowledge can help determine the appropriate approaches to take to foster and maintain a relationship and also how to communicate with publics on various issues. James Grunig, arguably the most recognized name in current public relations scholarship, conducted an "Excellence Study" that was sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicaors and, to date, it remains the largest research project in the public relations discipline. The situational theory of publics was a primary component of the study and a primary finding was that the effectiveness of public relations initiatives could be linked to the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics. Combining the research areas of organization-public relationships with the situational theory of publics can provide for a good measure of the effectiveness of public relations efforts by addressing how the perceptions among each of the relationship dimensions might impact communication behaviors.

Situational theory of publics is a method that allows communicators to identify which issues related to their organization are of greatest concern to their constituencies at a specific point in time. To most effectively determine the quality of the relationship between governments and citizens, it is important to reveal which issues are most salient in the minds of citizens. Additionally, it is important to assess the communication activities and channels that will have the greatest impact.

Based on the literature surrounding situational theory of publics the following question is asked and predictions are made concerning communication behaviors of citizens:

RQ2: What community issues are of greatest concern to citizens?

H1: The more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.

H2: The more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.

As previously noted, Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggested high involvement, high problem recognition, and low constraint recognition as situational predictors of active communication behaviors of publics. Therefore, the following hypotheses from the situational theory of publics are adopted for this research and modified for the government-citizen context.

H3: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens.

H4: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens.

H5: High communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government sponsored/organized activities than low communication activity citizens.

Although situational theory has been a powerful tool in identifying publics that will be active on given topics, it has not been proven practical in locating specific

channels to reach a desired public. Grunig and Hunt (1984) implied that active publics seek out almost any communication regarding high involvement issues. Yet, the majority of public relations campaigns are conducted using various mass media channels. Therefore, it is important to identify the demographic variables and the types of communication activities that would be used by highly active publics and not used by information processors. Hamilton (1992) was also interested in whether situational theory could be used to develop public relations campaigns through the media using demographic information and media preferences. He conducted a survey of citizens during the 1990 Kansas gubernatorial election and found that a strong pattern emerged regarding media preferences, communication activity and the demographic characteristics of age, education and income (Hamilton, 1992). It would seem that this type of information would be extremely beneficial for public relations practitioners working in government to allow them to segment audiences and also know which forms of communication would be most effective in reaching them. While Grunig (1989) was not optimistic about the utility of demographics in conjunction with situational theory variables, this study seeks to test their use. Grunig asserted, "Demographics also serve as useful locators of publics and other segments in inner nests, although the segments identified by demographics usually do not overlap with publics closely" (p. 222). This study investigates the degree to which traditional media demographics can be used in conjunction with Grunig's situational theory variables. To investigate, the following research questions are asked:

RQ3: Does communication activity, as defined by situational theory, differ by demographics?

RQ4: Do citizens defined by demographic characteristics differ in their media preferences?

Coorientation and the Coorientational Approach

One strategy for integrating both the public and the organization's perceptions of the relationship has been suggested numerous times throughout the literature (Ledingham, 2001, 2003; Ledingham and Bruning, 1998; Seltzer, 2005); yet, little research exists that has applied this approach (Jo, 2003). This research method is the coorientational approach.

Measuring the relationship between two or more parties is rooted in interpersonal communication literature. Defined as coorientation, it is an approach to observing individual behavior within the context of larger social structures and group behaviors (Sewell, 1989). Coorientation occurs when two or more individuals are simultaneously oriented to one another and to something of mutual interest (Broom, 2005). The assumption is that individuals behave according to their perceptions of the views of others and other's intentions regarding the object of mutual interest. Groups of individuals, then, also behave according to their perceptions of another group's views positions, and intentions. Similarly, applying this to public relations, organizations and publics act based on ones perceptions of the collective actions of the other.

The coorientation model can be traced to psychological studies about the mutual orientation of two individuals to some object. It was introduced by Newcomb (1953),

who defined coorientation as “perceived consensus” in a system “straining toward symmetry” (p. 393). Coorientation proposes that the attitudes of two parties (A & B) toward an object (X) are influenced in large part by how they perceive each other’s attitudes toward the object.

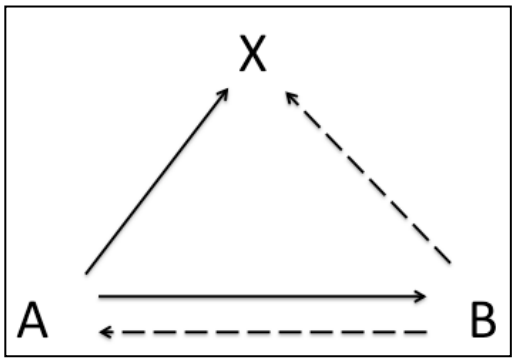


Figure 2-1: Newcomb’s (1953) ABX model

Several researchers addressed this issue with research into interpersonal communication. Interpersonal relationships are those between two groups of individuals or a small group of individuals (Heider, 1958). Two significant research studies were those of Mcleod and Chaffee (1973) and Grunig and Stamm (1973). Grunig and Stamm looked at the coorientational paradigm and discovered that the important piece was the relationship that the sender of a message had with the receiver. They believed that it was the relationship that was the most important component to address. The conclusion of both studies was that the relationship between individuals could be viewed as a construct separate from attitudes and beliefs of individuals. The important contribution of the research of McLeod and Chaffee (1973) and the main difference between their assertions and that of Newcomb (1953) was the emphasis that was placed on the object (X) in the

equation. Instead of X being an object, they proposed that X was the relationship itself. They asserted that it was not the orientation toward X that was important, rather it was the discrimination (difference) between the orientation of the two individuals or groups regarding X that was most important.

Again, Ferguson (1984) proved to be forward thinking because among the dimensions that she suggested could be useful in quantifying the nature of organization-public relationships she listed mutuality of understanding, agreement, and consensus and noted that the coorientational measurement model could be useful in conceptualizing the variables for this type of paradigm focus. A more recent study by Connelly and Knuth (2002) suggested that the elements that are important to analyze are the ideas and representations of individuals and their perceptions of the ideas and representations regarding an issue of concern. They identified three variables to analyze- congruency, accuracy, and agreement. In organization- public relationships, these three variables are defined as follows: congruency refers to how accurate the perceptions an organization has about the views of the public and vice versa; accuracy is defined as how accurate the organization is in predicting the views of the public and vice versa; and agreement is how much agreement exists between the organization and the public.

In evaluating organization-public relationships, Broom and Dozier (1990) identified four states of the relationship that exists. The first is the organization's view or the organizations direct perspective. Second is the public's view or the public's direct perspective. Third is the organization's perception of the public's view also known as he organization's meta-perspective. The final state is the public's perceptions of the

organization's views known as the public's meta-perspective. Addressing each of these states can provide a holistic view of the relationship.

A renowned public relations scholar, Broom began his research on coorientation measurement and public relations in the 1970's (Broom, 1977). He believed it was most important to measure the differences in the levels of agreement or perceived agreement between two individuals or groups. This can be measured by looking at the D-score. The D-score is the difference between the means of two groups. A high D-score indicates low levels of agreement and perceived agreement between two people or groups (Broom, 1977). In looking at organization public relationships, this may explain why an organization and its public have similar views on the relationship; however, the relationship is still deemed as poor.

Broom and Dozier (1990) propose four different states of coorientation that exist based on the results of the D-scores: consensus, dissensus, false consensus, and false conflict (false dissensus). Consensus results when the organization and the public have similar views. Dissensus occurs when the organization and the public have different views. False consensus occurs when the organization believes that the public has similar views when in reality that is not the case; and vice versa. False conflict or false dissensus occurs when an organization believes that the public has different views and in reality that is not the case; and vice versa.

As a result of the usefulness of the coorientation model, it has been repeatedly recommended in the public relations literature to evaluate the quality of the organization-public relationship. The majority of the studies focusing on organization-public

relationships have only focused on one side, either the organization or the public. The few that have looked at both sides of the relationship using the coorientational model have evaluated the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists (Avery et al., 2010) public relations practitioners and lawyers (Cameron & Shin, 2004), neighboring countries (Veric, Veric & Laco, 2005), non-profits and donors (Waters, 2007), students and their campus police department (Seltzer, 2007) and politicians and citizens (Hesse, 1976). Surprisingly, a content analysis that looked at the research from 2000 to 2011 on organization-public relationships found that of the forty studies that were conducted only two of the studies analyzed the relationship from the coorientational perspective.

One of the first studies that used the coorientation theory and model looked at Wisconsin state senators and their constituencies (Hesse, 1976). This study found that there was a high level of agreement between the two groups. Waters (2007) analyzed the relationship between non-profit organizations and donors and found that there were differences in congruency and accuracy between non-profits and donors. A study by Avery, Lariscy, and Sweetser (2010) that analyzed the social media use of public relations practitioners and journalists uncovered only slight differences in the areas of congruency, accuracy and agreement. Conversely, a 2005 study by Veric, Veric, and Laco that looked at the relationship between the countries of Slovenia and Croatia found significant differences in congruency accuracy and agreement.

The majority of the coorientation studies only look at one organization and one of its publics. In his retrospective of organization-public relationships, Ledingham (2006)

claimed to have conducted a coorientational analysis of government-citizenry relationships; however, upon close examination of the study, Ledingham (2001) only measures one side of the relationship- the citizen's view. Ledingham (2006) does assert that the advancement of relationship management theory includes the coorientation measurement model adapted by Broom and Dozier (1990) and shown in Figure 2-2. However, Ledingham's (2001) specific study on local government and its citizenry relied solely on citizen focus groups and citizen surveys. His research does not even indicate that the views of government officials were measured (Ledingham, 2006), calling into question how and if the coorientation method was implemented in the research design.

Taylor and Kent (2006) argue that coorientation theory may help governments to "identify and measure issues where organizations and publics differ" (p. 352). Overall, "using the coorientational model, the public relations practitioner can isolate areas of confusion or misunderstanding between the organization and its publics, thereby enabling the (practitioner to) focus his public relations program on these important issues" (Whitcomb, 1976, p. 26).

This study takes a different approach to measuring the organization-public relationship. With its goal of seeking to measure the government-citizen relationship rather than to understand the dynamics of one government's relationship with its citizens,

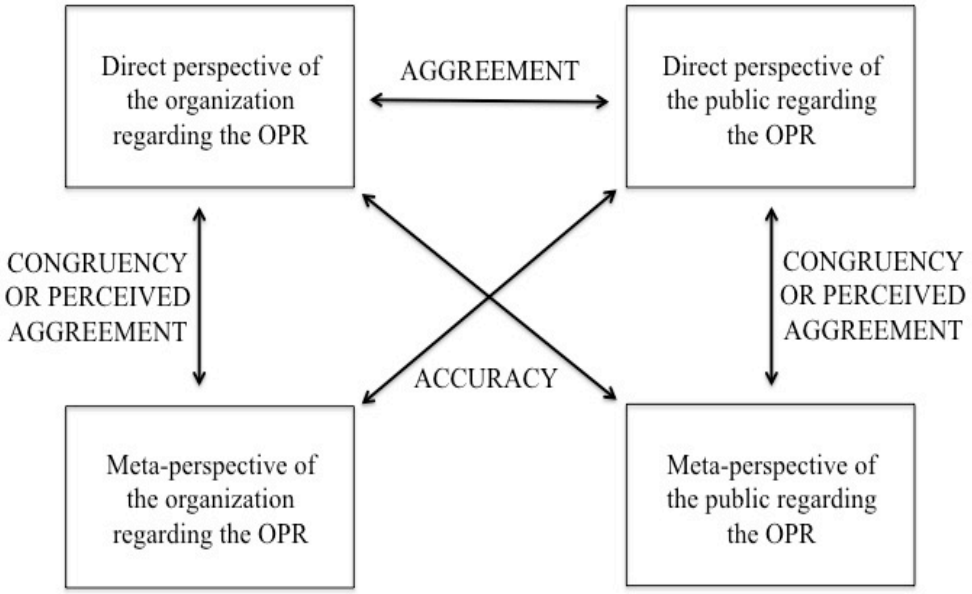


Figure 2-2. Representation of the coorientational model of organization-public relationships (adapted from Broom & Dozier (1990).

this study uses multiple local governments to capture the fundamental essence of the local government-citizen relationship. For this reason, this study breaks new ground by using the coorientation model to measure the relationship between local governments and citizens. Use of this methodology prompts the following research questions.

RQ5: To what extent do governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship?

RQ6: To what extent do governments and citizens perceive agreement between themselves and the other side on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

RQ7: To what extent are governments and citizens accurate in predicting the other side's views on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

R8: What coorientation state exists between governments and citizens on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

By understanding the two-sided dynamics of the government-citizen relationship, it is possible to make suggestions for future research on relationship building in this particular context. Additionally, practical implications may emerge that could help improve the communication activities of governments to citizens. Table 2-1 provides an overview of the study's hypotheses and research questions and table 2-2 identifies the independent and dependent variables associated with each hypothesis and research question if applicable.

Table 2-1. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Statistical Test
RQ1: To what extent do citizens give local governments a favorable rating on the relationship dimensions?	Mean and Standard Deviation
RQ2: What community issues are of greatest concern to citizens? Local government officials?	Mean and Standard Deviation
H1: The more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Correlations
H2: The more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Correlations
H3: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens.	Correlations
H4: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens	Correlations
H5: High communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government sponsored/organized activities than low communication activity citizens.	Correlations
RQ3: Does communication activity, as defined by situational theory, differ by demographics?	Chi-Squre
RQ4: Does media preference differ by demographics?	Chi-Square
RQ5: To what extent do governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship?	D-scores
RQ6: To what extent do governments and citizens perceive agreement between themselves and the other side on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	D-scores
RQ7: To what extent are governments and citizens accurate in predicting the other side's views on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	D-scores

Table 2-1. Continued. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Statistical Test
RQ8: What coorientation state exists between governments and citizens on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	N/A

Table 2-2. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions with Variables Identified.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable
RQ1: To what extent do citizens give local governments a favorable rating on the relationship dimensions?	Commitment, trust, Satisfaction, Control Mutuality	Level of Rating on the relationship dimensions
RQ2: What community issues are of greatest concern to citizens? Local government officials?	Community Issues	Level of Concern
H1: The more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Communication Behaviors-level of involvement, problem recognition, constraint recognition	Government-citizen relationship quality
H2: The more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Level of familarity with government activities	Government-citizen relationship quality
H3: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens.	Level of communication activity	Level of information seeking
H4: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens	Level of communication activity	Level of information processing
H5: High communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government sponsored/organized activities than low communication activity citizens.	Communication Activity Level	Governemnt Sponsored Activity Participation
RQ3: Does communication activity, as defined by situational theory, differ by demographics?	Demographic Variables: gender, income, education, etc.	Communiation activity level-low, moderate, high
RQ4: Does media preference differ by demographics?	Demographic Variables: gender, income, education, etc.	Amount of media use

Table 2-2. Continued. Summary of the Current Study's Five Hypotheses and Eight Research Questions with Variables Identified.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable
RQ5: To what extent do governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship?	Level of agreement	Evaluation of the government-citizen relationship quality
RQ6: To what extent do governments and citizens perceive agreement between themselves and the other side on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Level of perceived agreement	Evaluation of the government-citizen relationship quality
RQ7: To what extent are governments and citizens accurate in predicting the other side's views on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Accuracy in predicting the other side's views	Evaluation of the government-citizen relationship quality
RQ8: What coorientation state exists between governments and citizens on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Coorientation state-concensus, dissensus, false concensus, false conflict	Evaluation of the government-citizen relationship quality

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship dimensions proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999) as they apply to government communication. This study provides a general understanding of the government-citizen relationship by conducting a national study of local government officials and citizens. A second goal of this study is to assess the applicability of the situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1983) as an operational model for measuring the strength of the relationship between governments and citizens and identifying the communication behaviors that will have the greatest impact thereon. The third goal for this research is to examine the perception of both parties in the relationship (local governments and citizens) using the coorientational methodology outlined by Broom and Dozier (1990) and Kelly (1998). Only recently has research analyzed both sides of the organization-relationship (Waters, 2007; Avery & Lariscy, 2007; Seltzer, 2007). However, little effort has been made to measure the organization-public relationship in terms of the parties' levels of agreement, their perceptions, and the accuracy of those perceptions regarding relationship quality. An additional purpose of this study is to determine which communication tactics are the most effective for government communication with citizens.

Study Design

Because this study attempts to generalize as much as possible about the overall relationship between local governments and citizens, a quantitative approach is most appropriate. This study utilized survey research to capture both parties' evaluations of

the government-citizen relationship. The survey approach is regarded as one of the most appropriate methods for collecting data that describes a situation or phenomenon (Fowler, 1995). It is the only method that allows researchers to describe characteristics of a large population accurately, when sampled properly (Fowler, 1995). The most important considerations in research and, in particular surveys, are validity and reliability. In social science research, three types of validity are usually considered: face validity, content validity, and construct validity. Face validity is usually addressed by the credibility of the researcher (Babbie, 1990). Content validity refers to whether or not the individual items in the survey are good and useful items to address the research goals. Last, content validity is usually assessed by having professionals or experts in a particular area look over the surveys and provide feedback. Of the three types of validity, construct validity is considered the most important type (Carmines & Zeller, 1979) and addresses whether or not the survey is actually measuring the intended constructs. Factor analysis was used in this study to evaluate validity and to ensure that all of the items were measuring the intended construct.

Reliability, on the other hand, is concerned with consistency (Babbie, 1990). Reliability addresses whether or not the same study, when conducted under the same conditions, would get the same results. In survey research, the greatest concern is internal consistency. Internal consistency is frequently tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which determines the internal consistency. Knowing the alpha levels enables a researcher to identify measurement items that are not consistent with the others and eliminate them (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau, 2004). This

is why pretesting or pilot testing is so important in the research process. A pilot test was used in this study and the details of the test are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

All research has some inherent limitations, and survey research is no different. Currently, the most frequently used survey administration technique is through the Internet (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001). Some important considerations for web-based survey administration are the sample collections and design, survey non-response, the quality of the data, and the time and cost associated with survey administration (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001).

One of the primary considerations with web-based surveys regarding the sample is that everyone in the sampled population may not have access to the Internet. This can be best addressed by using email distribution lists to reach everyone in a sample. A unique feature of web-based surveys is the ability to have it set so that a participant cannot move on to the next page of the survey without completing all of the items on the page. This helps address survey non-response issues where individuals do not complete every question on the questionnaire. Researchers strive for limited non-response occurrences (Couper et al., 2001). Another area of importance and consideration is nonresponse error that is defined as the differences in the characteristics of those who choose to respond to a survey and those who chooses not to participate (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Studies comparing the response rates for mail, telephone and Internet surveys have found the lowest response rates for the Internet approach (de Leeuw, 2008, p. 129). One meta-analysis of fifty-six Internet surveys found an average response rate of 35% (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000); however, the American Association for Pubic

Opinion research cautions that the relationship between survey response and survey quality is unclear (AAPOR, 2014). Additionally, the quality of the data with web-based surveys is generally good because it limits the amounts of missing data and input errors (Couper et al., 2001). Results can be downloaded into statistical processing programs such as SPSS, which makes the data analysis process less cumbersome. One of the greatest benefits of using the Internet for survey administration is the time and cost. It is relatively easy to put a survey online and there is typically not much time involved in management. Once a survey is live, there is usually nothing a researcher has do to manage it (Couper et al., 2001). Given the advantages outlined above, this study used web-based surveys to generate data for analysis.

Pilot Study

To begin analysis of the local government-citizen relationship, a pilot study was conducted in the spring of 2013. The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the relationship dimensions proposed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999) as they apply to government communication. The pilot study sought to provide a general understanding of the government-citizen relationship by examining local governments from the perspectives of citizens. Based on the pilot study's focus on measuring the relationship between local governments and citizens from the citizen perspective, the following research questions and hypotheses were developed for the pilot study:

RQ1: To what extent do citizens give their local governments a favorable rating on the four relationship dimensions?

H1: Women will rate the organization-public relationship more positively than men on the four relationship dimensions.

RQ2: To what extent do the Hon and Grunig variables adequately capture the government-citizen relationship?

Local government officials were not studied at this time because the majority of previous studies utilizing the Hon and J. Grunig (1999) scale to study the organization-public relationship had been done from the perspective of the organization and had supported it as a reliable relationship measurement tool. This pilot study sought to evaluate the scale from the stakeholder side of the relationship.

Pilot Study Method

The population of interest in this study is citizens of local governments. Using a snowball sample, the survey was administered to students at a large southeastern university. One hundred and eighty five students completed the survey (65 males; 120 females). The sample population included 44 freshmen, 60 sophomores, 59 juniors and 21 seniors. Students can provide meaningful evaluations of their relationship with their local government since they would be considered a key public for a local government's relationship building efforts. A recent survey by the Panetta Institute for Public Policy (2012) shows that U.S. college students are growing increasingly concerned about the future of our country. Because of this, determining the status of the relationship that exists between local governments and college students can provide governments with essential information to build and promote these relationships and capitalize on this growing concern for the future which would likely lead college students toward greater

public participation. In addition, it provides a useful sample to test the survey instrument before distributing it to the larger population.

The study defines relational quality as factors that determine or characterize successful relationships between an organization and its strategic publics. The relationship items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. The response of the scale ranged from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) somewhat disagree (4) neither agree nor disagree (5) somewhat agree (6) agree; and (7) strongly agree. The items were presented in random order. Respondents were instructed to evaluate their feelings about relationships with their local governments.

Reliability of the relationship dimensions varied. Cronbach's alpha for the initial measures was as follows: control mutuality .90, trust .84, satisfaction .91, and commitment .79. All of the initial measures met the acceptable criteria (Nunnally, 1978). The indicators-- control mutuality and satisfaction-- are considered to have "excellent" reliability, trust is considered to have "good" reliability, and commitment is considered to have "adequate" reliability based on threshholds set by Hair, Tatham, Anderson, and Black (1998).

Data Analysis Procedures for Pilot Study

To test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, several different statistical procedures were used to analyze the data collected from citizens. Before describing the results of the study, it is necessary to explain what data were examined and give a brief description of the statistical procedure.

The research question simply gauged how citizens would evaluate their relationship with their local government. To answer this research question, mean scores were calculated for each index of the four relationship dimensions (satisfaction, trust, commitment, and control mutuality). The standard deviation was also sought to determine how closely the entire data set clustered around the mean value.

The first and second hypotheses sought to determine if various demographic variables (gender, year in school) of citizens impacted their evaluations of the government-citizen relationship. To determine if groups differed in their evaluations, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using the classifications of the citizens.

Research question two asked whether the modified Hon and Gruing (1999) scale was appropriate to use to measure the government citizen relationship. To refine the measures of relationship quality, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed. EFA was used to establish a preliminary version of measures by identifying items with low factor loadings and checking to see if each measurement item loaded on the intended factor. The major goal of this step of the analysis was to evaluate the dimensionality and appropriateness of the measurement variables. This would also determine if any measurement items should be deleted.

Results of Pilot Study

The first research questions asked how citizens perceived the government-citizen relationship across the 4 relationship dimensions. The data indicate that citizens tend to perceive the relationship neutrally in all four areas. Of the four dimensions, control

mutuality was the one that was evaluated most strongly by citizens ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.12$) although all of the dimensions were evaluated neutrally. Trust ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.19$) and commitment ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.21$) were very similar in how they were viewed by the group of citizens surveyed, and satisfaction ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.14$) had the lowest evaluation of the relationship dimensions falling slightly below the scale's neutral point.

Hypothesis 1 stated that women will evaluate the organization-public relationship more positively than men on the four relationship dimensions. A simple comparison indicates that overall men and women do not evaluate the relationship differently among the four relationship dimensions--- trust ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.25$ vs. $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.17$) control mutuality ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.07$ vs. $M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.15$) satisfaction ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.16$ vs. $M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.13$), and commitment ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.17$ vs. $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.13$).

Although it appears that there are no differences in how males and females evaluated the relationship dimension, it is necessary to further test the data by conducting an ANOVA. As Table 3-1 indicates, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, and hypothesis 1 was not supported.

The second research question asked if the organizations-public relationship scale developed by Hon and Grunig (1999) is a good measure of the government-citizen relationship. The four latent variables with multiple items were analyzed. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that all of the items used on the scale were appropriate; therefore, none of the items were removed. The results illustrated that all four dimensions are

Table 3-1. Pilot Study: One-Way ANOVA on Evaluation of the Citizen Relationship with their Local Government Based on Gender.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Satisfaction	5.271	3	1.757	1.342	.262
Commitment	4.217	3	1.406	.948	.419
Control Mutuality	7.239	3	2.413	1.926	.127
Trust	7.578	3	2.526	1.772	.154

variable constructs for measuring relationship quality outcomes. Cronbach's alpha for the measures was as follows: control mutuality .90, trust .84, satisfaction .91, and commitment .79. All of these meet the criteria and range from adequate to excellent.

Conclusions from Pilot Study

A primary purpose of this pilot study was to establish valid and reliable measures of the outcomes of quality relationships. Hon and Grunig's version of the four relationship dimensions was tested using multiple-item measures. Factor analysis supported that the 16 items in the relationship scale were an accurate measure of the government-citizen relationship, and none of the items needed to be discarded.

The study also examined how citizens perceive the government-citizen relationship across the four dimensions, and the data revealed that the majority of citizens have a positive view of the relationship. It was not surprising that satisfaction with their local government received the lowest ranking since students would likely not be heavily involved or invested in the activities of their local government while control mutuality received the highest evaluation. This finding could suggest that citizens, particularly college students, do not perceive a need or have an expectation for communication with their governments. Additionally, there was no difference in the perceptions of the government- citizen relationship between men and women. Likewise, year in school did not impact the perceptions of local government relations, and there was not a statistical difference between the feelings of freshmen and seniors.

The instrument refined in this study is both valid and reliable and can be used to improve program management in public relations, particularly in the government

communication domain. Specifically, by providing an analysis of the relationship that exists between an organization and its publics it can help public relations professionals justify the value of public relations initiatives to their organization since the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics is a strong indicator of effectiveness. Although this pilot study is original and compelling in several ways, it has limitations that nonetheless can help guide future research endeavors and assist in tailoring the approach to the main study for this research. First, this study collected data from students who may provide different responses than other segments of the population. Future studies should do a random sample of citizens and not rely solely on one specific group. In addition, this study only looked at one side of the relationship, citizens, and future studies could do a comparison of both sides, the government and citizens, to get a more accurate picture of the actual government-citizen relationship. Therefore, it is impossible to generalize the findings, based on the restrictions outlined above. However, the primary purpose of this pilot study was not to provide a detailed understanding of the local government-citizen relationship; rather, it was intended to see if the Hon-Grunig (1999) scale was appropriate to use to evaluate the relationship from the perspective of citizens.

Pilot Study Evaluation

When implementing the main study, it will be important to make sure that many demographic variables of citizens are represented to be able to get a solid understating of the local government-citizen relationship. In addition, several of the survey questions were confusing to participants, and the wording was improved to avoid confusion. For

example, the question, “The public would rather work with the organization than not,” was changed to, “The public would rather work with local government agencies and officials than not,” and “Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do” was changed to “Local government officials (ex: elected officials, department heads) have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.” Careful consideration needs to be made when looking at the wording of the survey questions in order to not stray to far from those originally included in the Hon-Gruig (1999) scale. These changes were minor and do not affect the reliability initially demonstrated in the pilot study.

Main Study

Populations and Samples

One of the first questions that must be addressed in survey research is what population should be studied to answer the guiding research questions and hypotheses of the project. The population of interest in this study is the local government sector and its citizens. In order to investigate the government-citizen relationship, Aimpoint, a private survey research firm that specializes in local government and public policy research assisted with the survey administration. The researcher has an established relationship with the leadership of Aimpoint and has partnered with them recently on several national projects. Given the rich data generated from recent studies utilizing Aimpoint for data collection, the researcher believed using them for this project would produce similarly robust results.

Local Governments

The researcher selected Aimpoint to partner with based on its ability to reach the most broad and representative sample of government offices that serve a wide range of population sizes and are diverse in the form of their governments (mayor, manager, commission, etc.). Community size and government structure are moderating variables in this study and should be evaluated independently in future research since the community size and form of government may effect the relationship. Web-based surveys were sent to Aimpoint's database of more than 5,000 local government officials to collect data for the government side of the study. This same database has been used in recent studies regarding local governments (Avery & Graham, 2013; Graham & Avery, 2014; Avery, Graham & Park, 2014) and has gotten much participation and interest from the respondents. A total of 322 government officials from different municipalities participated in the survey about their local government, representing a 6% completed survey response rate. This response rate does not include participants who did not pass the screening question, which would make the overall click rate higher. This low response rate could be attributed to participant fatigue since several requests to participate in research had been sent to individuals on this database recently. The database used by Aimpoint was generated using publically available information. Following IRB protocol, participants were first sent a solicitation email that requested their participation. If they chose to click on the survey link, participants were first asked to read a statement of informed consent then notified that by clicking to continue the survey they were expressing their consent. In order to achieve representation from all 50 states, a

reminder email was sent after one week to individuals in the states that had not responded. The survey data were stripped of identifying information prior to being given to the researcher. As an incentive, participants were promised an aggregate summary of data for completing the survey.

Citizens

A consumer research panel was used to collect data regarding local governments from citizens. Aimpoint partnered with the website opinionworld.com to reach a national group of citizens. Participants had previously registered with the website to receive invitations to participate in surveys. Email invitations to participate were sent to 1,469 individuals. From this, 304 participants completed the survey, representing a 30-percent response rate. Participants of the consumer panel were not paid for their participation; however, they were entered into a lottery for a drawing to receive a nominal prize. Four Ipad Mini tablets were given to four participants who were selected from the lottery pool. The request to participate in the survey was sent from opinionworld.com; however the link in the email sent them directly to the survey site that was hosted by Aimpoint.

Instrument Design

The survey used in this research combines previous research on the dimensions of organization-public relationships (Huang, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) and situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1983). The research instrument adopted indicators from previous studies Seltzer, 2007; Waters, 2007; Hamilton; 1992; Aldoory, 2005) with slight modifications to more closely represent the government-citizen relationship. The

instrument also gathers demographic information, opinions, and uses of various communication tactics.

Because the surveys used in this research ask participants to evaluate the government-citizen relationship from both sides of the relationship, the questionnaires were designed to maximize responses despite the large number of questions. In both the government official and citizen versions of the surveys, the 20 items representing the four relationship dimensions are presented twice. In the first presentation, the respondents were instructed to indicate their personal response to each item, or their direct perspective. In the second presentation, the respondent was instructed to estimate how a member of the other side (either local government official or citizen) would respond to the same item, or their meta-perspective. Following Hon and Grunig's recommendations (1999), the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements that measure the four relationship dimensions of trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment. While Hon and Grunig (1999) used a nine-point Likert scale, studies that have focused on survey response options have found that respondents find five or seven-point scales easier to utilize (Groves et al., 2004). Therefore, the questionnaire developed for this research used a seven-point scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.

Questions measuring the variables addressed in the situational theory of publics were only included on the citizen surveys. Items evaluating problem recognition, constraint recognition, level of involvement, information seeking, and level of

involvement were included on the citizen survey and were derived and adapted from instruments used in previous studies (Grunig, 1999; Hamilton, 1992).

Information on measures of the relationship dimensions of organization-public relationships and each of the communication behaviors evaluated by the situational theory of publics is below.

Relationship Dimensions

This study measures the four organization-public relationship dimensions that were proposed by Huang (1997) and further explicated by Hon and Grunig (1999). These relationship dimensions are trust, commitment, control mutuality, and satisfaction. A detailed list of the relationship dimensions and the scale items associated with each dimension can be found in Appendix A.

Control Mutuality

This dimension of relationship quality involves the distribution of power. It encompasses the extent to which the parties in the relationship agree as to who is authorized to exert power and control over one another. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure control mutuality reads, "This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say" (p.4).

Commitment

Grounded in interpersonal communication literature, commitment is defined as "the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p. 20). A sample item from

the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure commitment reads, “I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me” (p. 4).

Satisfaction

Relationships are perceived as satisfying when the expected benefits of being in the relationship exceed the costs of being in the relationship. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure satisfaction reads, “I am happy with this organization” (p. 4).

Trust

Many public relations scholars view trust as fundamental to understanding the organization-public relationship. It has been purported that without trust an organization could not exist (Veric & J. Grunig, 1995). Put simply, trust refers to one party’s confidence that it can be open and honest with another party and is comprised of several other concepts including integrity, dependability, and competence. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined trust as “doing what an organization says it will do” (p. 98). A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure trust reads, “This organization treats people like me fairly and justly” (p. 4).

Hon and Grunig (1999) operationalized these four dimensions with two separate sets of measures. The full set of measures included 35 indicators and a shortened version using 21 items. This study uses the shortened scales; however, one additional item from the full scale was included for each of the four dimensions because the researcher felt those items would effectively tap into issues important to the government-citizen

relationship. The items are randomly arranged on the survey so that participants do not evaluate all of one measure sequentially.

Communication Behaviors

This research analyzes the five communication behavior variables described in Grunig's (1983) situational theory of publics. There are three independent variables- level of involvement, problem recognition, constraint recognition- and two independent variables- information processing and information seeking. A list of the variables and the measurement items associated with each variable can be found in Appendix B.

Level of Involvement

The level of involvement is a measure of how personally and emotionally relevant a problem can be for an individual (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). An individual's involvement increases the likelihood of them attending to and comprehending messages (Pavlik, 1988). Dervin (1989) made the assertion that messages will be attended to only if the benefits or dangers associated with them take on a kind of personal reality or usefulness. To measure their levels of involvement participants are asked questions relating to their involvement in their local governments.

Problem Recognition

The extent to which individuals recognize a problem facing them is known as problem recognition. Individuals do not stop to think about situations unless they perceive that something needs to be done to improve the situation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). To measure problem recognition, participants are asked about the importance of certain issues in their local communities. Specifically, they were asked to evaluate the

importance of education, public safety, public infrastructure, taxes, economy, codes enforcement, and parks and recreation.

Constraint Recognition

Constraint recognition is the degree that individuals see their behaviors being limited by factors beyond their control. Constraint recognition is measured by asking participants questions about the extent they can influence or make a difference in their local government.

Information Seeking

Active communication behavior can also be called information seeking. Actively communicating members of the public look for information and try to understand the information they receive. To evaluate the information seeking tendencies of survey participants, questions were asked about their engagement in certain information seeking activities such as their likelihood to use various media outlets to seek information and how frequently they use certain information outlets.

Information Processing

Passive communication behavior is also called information processing. This occurs when passively communicating members of the public do not look for information, but they will process information that comes at them randomly. Questions about the amount of attention that is given to information they receive about their local government was used to evaluate their level of information processing.

Data Analysis Procedures

To answer the research questions and test the study's hypotheses, several different statistical procedures were used to analyze the data collected from local government officials and citizens. It is important to explain the data that was examined for this study's research questions and hypotheses and provide a brief description of the statistical procedures that were used before presenting the results of the study.

Simple descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of the characteristics of the participants in each sample. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to explain the ratings given by each party on each of the relationship dimensions. This provides direct and meta-perspective scores for both local governments and citizens. In most cases, means and standard deviations are reported. In addition, simple descriptive statistics were used to identify the issues of greatest concern to citizens. More sophisticated statistical tests were used for the remainder of the data interpretation. To analyze the impact that the communication behaviors of problem recognition, level of involvement, and constraint recognition have on the quality of the local government-citizen relationship, correlation tests were conducted. Chi-square analysis was used to look at the impact of various demographic variables on communication behaviors and media use. Difference scores were used to calculate the level of symmetry between an organization and its publics. This method was suggested by Broom and Dozier (1990) and involves the subtraction of one mean from another in order to arrive at degrees of accuracy and agreement. In this study, D-scores were calculated for each citizen respondent by subtracting the average of the relationship ratings of both their direct and

meta-perspectives from the average direct perspective ratings of local government officials. As defined by Broom and Dozier (1990), once D-scores are determined, these scores are compared to identify the strength of the relationship. A lower D-score indicates a higher level of agreement or perceived agreement and vice versa. As previously outlined in the review of literature, based on the results of the D-score, the relationship can be categorized by four different coorientation states: (a) consensus, (b) dissensus, (c) false consensus, and (d) false conflict (Broom & Dozier, 1990). A state of consensus occurs when the organization and the public agree on an issue. In this state, both sides fundamentally share the same view and they recognize the agreement. Dissensus, which is the opposite of consensus, occurs when the two sides disagree and they know that disagreement exists between them. Inaccurate perceptions about the views that the other side holds about the issue provide the basis for the other two states. False consensus occurs when both groups believe that they agree in spite of actual disagreement, whereas false conflict exists when each party misjudges its disagreement on the issue.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter details the results of data analysis testing the hypotheses and answering the research questions. First, information about the examination and cleaning of the data set is given, including checks for missing data. Next, details about the construction of the relationship and communication behaviors are presented as well as assessments on reliability of the scales. Third, the demographics on the public (citizen) and organization (local government) are presented. Then, hypotheses and research questions are tested in the order that they were presented in the literature review. Results were obtained using a range of data analysis methods including chi-square, ANOVA, correlations, and t-tests. A review of the research questions and hypotheses, as well as a synopsis of their findings and results, are presented in table 4-1.

Data Analysis Preparation

Both surveys were programmed so that participants were required to answer each question before moving on to the next one. This addressed the item-missing data problem that is sometimes associated with survey research. Item missing data occurs when information is missing for some items on an observation that has provided data on other items, which happens when the participant answers some questions on a survey and not others (Groves et al., 2004). The survey software made data easily downloadable into SPSS, and it is in this form that Aimpoint provided the data to the researcher. In cases where it appeared that the research participant had answered all questions with the same

Table 4-1. Presentation of Findings.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Findings
RQ1: To what extent do citizens give local governments a favorable rating on the relationship dimensions?	Not at all along all four relationship dimensions
RQ2: What community issues are of greatest concern to citizens?	Public Safety-most Parks and Recreation- least
H1: The more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Supported
H2: The more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of government-citizen relationship outcomes.	Supported
H3: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens.	Supported
H4: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens	Supported
H5: High communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government sponsored/organized activities than low communication activity citizens.	Supported
RQ3: Does communication activity, as defined by situational theory, differ by demographics?	Yes
RQ4: Does media use differ by demographics?	Yes; difference occurred among the age and education demographic variables
RQ5: To what extent do governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship?	Perceived disagreement

Table 4-1. Continued. Presentation of Findings.

Hypothesis or Research Question	Findings
RQ6: To what extent do governments and citizens perceive agreement/ Disagreement between themselves and the other side on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Disagreement
RQ7: To what extent are governments and citizens accurate in predicting the other side's views on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Accurate
RQ8: What coorientation state exists between governments and citizens on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?	Dissensus

response or that they had utilized some type of pattern for there answers, these results were not included in the data analysis.

Scale Reliability

To measure the reliability of the Hon-Grinig (1999) organization-public relationship scale, Cronbach's Alpha's were run for each survey item and construct. Cronbach's alpha provides a measure of the internal consistency of the items that make up the scale (Hair et al., 1998). Using SPSS, the scale reliability was assessed for each of the sets of items that are used to measure the various relationship dimensions- trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality- of the Hon-Grunig organization-public relationship scale. The lowest limit to be considered an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha is .70 (Hair et al., 1998). Table 4-2 lists the alpha levels for each relationship dimension on both the citizen and local government official surveys. Alpha values ranged from .92 to .97 and are therefore presumed to be reliable.

Sample Demographics

Before presenting the results of the research questions and hypotheses, it is necessary to look at the demographic characteristics of both local government officials and citizens. One of the primary goals of this research was to push the measurement of the organization-public relationship from its primary focus of only studying one side of the relationship-- the organization-- to one that captures both sides and the entire essence of the organization-public relationship.

Table 4-2. Cronbach's alpha values of the organization-public relationship dimensions.

	Local Government	Citizens
Satisfaction	.97	.93
Commitment	.95	.93
Control Mutuality	.96	.92
Trust	.97	.95

Local Government Sample

To obtain information on local governments, Aimpoint administered a national survey to its database of more than 5,000 local government officials. A total of 322 local government officials completed the survey generating a six percent response rate. Although every local government is not represented in the original sample, great efforts were made to insure a broad range of geography and community types is represented in the sampling frame. Large metropolitan areas with offices where email is unlikely to reach qualified officials were called to establish contacts. There were a broad range of job titles, including: assistant city manager, chief information officer, chief of staff, city clerk, city manager, communication coordinator, director of public affairs, mayor, member of council, public information officer, public relations coordinator, town clerk, and village president. Both administrators and communications personnel were included in the sample so that offices without a full-time public information officer were not neglected. Regardless of title, participants were screened for suitability prior to participating by asking if they were capable of answering questions accurately and thoroughly about their local government's communication activities. Table 4-3 provides an overview of the characteristics of the local government officials who completed the survey. Participant responses from all 50 states are included in the data analysis. 83.5 percent of the participants were male and 16.5 percent were female. The majority of respondents were over the age of 45 with 21.2 percent between the ages of 45 and 54; 39.6 percent were between the ages of 55 and 64; and 29 percent were 65 years of age and older. In addition, most participants were Caucasian (95.4%). Almost all of the

Table 4-3. Demographic Characteristics of Local Government Officials.

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	274	83.5%
Female	54	16.5%
Age		
18-24	1	0.3%
25-34	9	2.7%
35-44	24	7.3%
45-54	70	21.2%
55-64	131	39.6%
65 and over	96	29.0%
Racial Heritage and Ethnicity		
African American	5	1.5%
Caucasian	313	95.4%
Hispanic	4	1.2%
American Indian	1	0.3%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Asian	0	0.0%
Prefer not to respond	2	0.6%
Other	3	0.9%
Highest level of Education		
Some High School	0	0.0%
High School Diploma	6	1.8%
Some College	65	19.6%
Bachelor's Degree	79	23.8%
Master's Degree/ professional	167	50.3%
PhD	15	4.5%
Number of Years Elected/ Worked for local government		
0-2	20	6.1%

Table 4-3. Continued. Demographic Characteristics of Local Government Officials.

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
3-5	52	15.8%
6-10	63	19.1%
11-15	48	14.6%
16 or more	147	44.6%

participants had some college education, with 23.8 percent holding a bachelor's degree. 50.3 percent had a master's or professional degree, and 4.5 percent had a PhD. Local government officials from community sizes ranging from less than 5,000 residents to more than 300,000 residents participated in the survey.

Local Citizens

Aimpoint also administered a web-based survey to citizens that are part of an online consumer research panel. An invitation to participate in the research was sent to 1,469 citizens and 304 citizens actually completed the survey, generating a 30-percent response rate. Table 4-4 confirms the broad demographic characteristics of the sample. Specifically, of the participants, 50.7 percent were female and 49.3 percent were male. All of the participants said that they were registered voters. The average age of participants was 41 with 9.5 percent of respondents being between that ages of 18 and 24; 20.5 percent between the ages of 25 and 34; 18.8 percent between the ages of 35 and 44; 19.4 percent between the ages of 45 and 54; 15.1 percent between the ages of 55 and 64; and 18.8 percent were over the age of 65. The majority of participants were married (57.6%) and had children (64.1%). Furthermore, most of the respondent reported voting in the last local election (88.5%). When asked about their political party affiliation, the majority of citizens (38.8%) identified themselves as Democrats; 30.3 percent said they were Republican; 18.1 percent were Independents; and 12.8 percent reported either having no affiliation, preferring not to respond or other.

Table 4-4. Demographic Characteristics of Citizens

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	150	49.3%
Female	154	50.7%
Age		
18-24	29	9.5%
25-34	62	20.4%
35-44	57	18.8%
45-54	59	19.4%
55-64	46	15.1%
65 and over	51	16.8%
Annual Household Income		
Less than $10,000	16	5.3%
$10,000-$24,999	35	11.5%
$25,000-$34,999	38	12.5%
$35,000-$49,999	43	14.1%
$50,000-$74,999	65	21.4%
$75,000-$99,999	46	15.1%
$100,000-$149,999	30	9.9%
$150,000 or more	17	5.6%
Prefer not to respond	14	4.6%
Racial Heritage and Ethnicity		
African American	28	9.2%
Caucasian	239	78.6%
Hispanic	19	6.3%
American Indian	2	0.7%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Asian	14	4.6%
Prefer not to respond	1	0.3%
Other	1	0.3%

Table 4-4. Continued. Demographic Characteristics of Citizens.

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
Highest level of Education		
Some High School	5	1.6%
High School Diploma	58	19.1%
Some College	107	35.2%
Bachelor's Degree	85	28.0%
Master's Degree/ professional	43	14.1%
PhD	6	2.0%
Rent or Own Home		
Rent	81	26.6%
Own	223	73.4%
Current Marital Status		
Married	175	57.6%
Single	74	24.3%
Domestic Partnership	14	4.6%
Divorced	28	9.2%
Widowed	11	3.6%
Prefer not to respond	2	0.7%
Have Children		
Yes	195	64.1%
No	1.9	35.9%
Voted in Last election		
Yes	269	88.5%
No	33	10.9%
Don't Know	2	0.7%
Political Party Affiliation		
Republican	92	30.3%
Democrat	118	38.8%
Independent	55	18.1%

Table 4-4. Continued. Demographic Characteristics of Citizens.

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
No Affiliation	29	9.5%
Other	1	0.3%
Prefer not to respond	9	3.0%

Results of Research Questions and Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 1

RQ1: To what extent do citizens give local government a favorable rating on the relationship dimensions?

This research question asked how citizens perceived the local government- citizen relationship along the four relationship dimensions. As shown in Table 4-5, the data indicate that citizens primarily possess neutral attitudes about the government-citizen relationship. In regards to the four relationship dimensions, commitment was the one evaluated most strongly by citizens ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.408$) although all of the dimensions evaluations were close to one another. Trust ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.43$) and control mutuality ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.30$) were similar in how they were viewed by citizens, and satisfaction had the lowest evaluation of the relationship dimensions ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.39$) and is slightly below the scale's neutral point.

Research Question 2

RQ2: What community issues are of greatest concern to citizens? Local government officials?

When asked about the importance of individual issues, citizens placed the highest levels of importance on public safety ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 1.17$) and the economy ($M = 6.01$, $SD = 1.25$). Conversely, codes enforcement ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.57$) and parks and recreation ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.51$) received the lowest ratings for levels of importance. Taxes ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.26$) were evaluated as the third issue of importance, and

Table 4-5. Local Citizen Direct Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions

Relationship Dimension	Mean	SD
Control Mutuality	4.28	1.30
Satisfaction	3.95	1.39
Commitment	4.35	1.41
Trust	4.15	1.43

surprisingly, education (M = 5.83, SD = 1.43) was shown to be fourth on the list. Public infrastructure (M = 5.53, SD = 1.30) was placed as fifth on the individual issues level of importance. A complete list of the rankings is provided in table 4-6.

Hypothesis 1

H1: The more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of the government- citizen relationship outcomes.

To address the relationship between communication behavior and the quality of the government citizen relationship, correlations were run between the items measuring the relationship dimensions and the items measuring communication behaviors. Spearman correlations were used due to the non-normal distribution of the relationship outcomes. The relationship outcomes evaluated in the analysis were accuracy, agreement, and congruency. When looking at the communication behavior of level of involvement, only one item, *"I have strong opinions about local government issues,"* showed a significant correlation. Citizens' strong opinions about local government issues are positively correlated with accurate predictions of the relationship outcomes, $r(302) = .159$, $p = .005$. Therefore, citizens with strong opinions about local governments are more accurate in predicting the government-citizen relationship. In sum, this reveals that the stronger the opinion of the citizen, the further the citizen's meta-score is from the government mean.

For the communication behavior of problem recognition, it is correlated with accuracy and agreement but not congruency. The item, "there are serious problems in

Table 4-6. Importance of Community issues

Community Issue	Mean	SD
Education	5.83	1.43
Public Safety	6.02	1.17
Public Infrastructure	5.53	1.30
Taxes	5.97	1.26
Economy	6.01	1.25
Parks and Recreation	4.86	1.51
Codes Enforcement	4.91	1.07

my local government," is positively correlated with both the relationship outcomes of accuracy, $r(302) = .375$, $p < .001$ and agreement $r(302) = .425$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the stronger citizens feel about problems in their local governments the higher the relationship outcome scores for accuracy and agreement, which signifies the more negative the relationship. When evaluating the importance of issues, it is negatively correlated to agreement as the relationship outcome. The higher the importance of issues to citizens, the lower the agreement score. Thus, the more agreement between citizens and local government officials, the more important local government issues are to citizens.

Constraint recognition is significantly correlated to all three relationship outcome-- accuracy, congruency, and agreement. All three are positive correlations: accuracy, $r(302) = .224$, $p < .001$, agreement $r(302) = .343$, $p < .001$, and congruency $r(302) = .124$, $p = .030$. This shows that the stronger the citizens feel they cannot change/impact their local government the higher the relationship outcome scores, which indicates the more negative the government-citizen relationship.

Hypothesis 2

H2: The more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of the government-citizen relationship outcomes.

The survey items addressing the number of programs that citizens participated in were used to measure their familiarity with government activities. In order to access the relationship between familiarity and the quality of the government-citizen relationship

outcomes, Spearman correlation tests were run. Because the relationship outcomes are not normally distributed, Spearman correlations were used instead of Pearson correlations, which have the assumption of a normal distribution. The relationship outcomes of accuracy, $r(302) = .185$, $p = .001$, and agreement $r(302) = .135$, $p = .018$) were negatively correlated to familiarity. Therefore, the more familiar citizens are with government programs, the lower the levels of accuracy and agreement which indicates more positive relationships. In addition, congruency was positively related to familiarity, $r(302) = .139$, $p = .015$). Hence, the farther the respondent feels the government is to their own responses (higher congruency), the higher the familiarity with local government activities (the more government programs they participate in).

Hypothesis 3

H3: High communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government sponsored/organized activities than low communication activity citizens.

Levels of involvement in communication activities are used to measure communication activity levels of citizens. Both survey item measures of the level of involvement, "*I have strong opinions about local government issues*" and *"There are serious problems in my local government*" are positively correlated with the level of participation by citizens in communication activities. The higher the level of involvement, the more active the respondent is in government activities. Local government participation by citizens is not correlated with "there are serious problems in

my local government," $r(302) = .017$, $p = .763$; however, it is significantly correlated with the level of importance that citizens place on issues. This positive correlation indicates that the more importance placed on local government issues, the more the citizen participates in local government programs.

The communication behavior of constraint recognition is negatively correlated with participation in local government activities, $r(302) = -.234$, $p < .001$. This shows that the more constrained the citizen feels about their ability to influence and affect change in government, the fewer the number of local government programs/activities they participate in.

Hypothesis 4

H4: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens.

To determine the relationship between information seeking and communication activity, correlations were used. Citizens' level of involvement is significantly correlated to information seeking, $r(302) = .415$, $p < .01$. This indicates the higher the level of involvement by citizens, the more information seeking they do. Problem recognition is also positively correlated to information seeking, $r(302) = .262$, $p < .01$. The more citizens recognize problems in their community, the more they actively seek information about their local governments. Constraint recognition is negatively correlated to information seeking, $r(302) = -.08$, $p = -.14$. The more constrained citizens

feel about influencing change in government, the less actively they seek information about their local governments.

Hypothesis 5

H5: High communication activity citizens will display significantly higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens.

Correlations were run to determine the relationship between level of information processing and communication behaviors. Level of involvement is positively correlated to information processing, $r(302) = .366$, $p < .001$. The relationship is positive which indicates the higher the level of involvement the more citizens actively process information. Problem recognition is also positively correlated with information processing, $r(302) = .578$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the more citizens recognize problems, the more information processing they do. Constraint recognition is negatively correlated with information processing, $r(302) = -.121$, $p < .05$, which shows that the more citizens feel that they can/cannot impact local governments, the less information processing they do.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Does communication activity, as defined by situational theory, differ by demographics?

To determine if communication behaviors of citizens differed by gender, independent samples t-tests were run. Level of involvement was the only communication

behavior that differed significantly by gender ($p < .001$). Looking at the means, males ($M = 4.54$) were significantly more involved in their local government than females ($M = 3.91$). There were no significant gender differences between the communication behaviors of problem recognition ($p = .837$) and constraint recognition ($p = .087$).

Nonparametric correlations were run to determine if there was a relationship between age and communication behaviors. Since age is an ordinal variable, a nonparametric test was appropriate to use. The only significant relationship found was between age and the communication behavior of problem recognition, $r(302) = .252$, $p < .001$. No relationship was found to exist between age and level of involvement ($p = .661$) or between age and constraint recognition ($p = .668$).

To determine the relationship between education and communication behaviors, nonparametric correlations were used. The relationship between education and a citizen's level of involvement was the only one found to be significant, $r(302) = .115$, $p = .007$. The relationship between education and level of involvement is positive, which indicates as education increases, the level of involvement increases. No relationship was found between education and problem recognition ($p = .745$) or between education and constraint recognition ($p = .736$).

Independent samples t-test were run to determine if communication behaviors differed between people with children and without children. Problem recognition was the only communication behavior that differed significantly by gender ($p = .002$). Looking at the means, citizens with children were significantly more likely to recognize problems in their communities ($M = 5.71$) than citizens without kids ($M = 5.37$). No significant

differences were found with level of involvement (p = 1.00) or constraint recognition (p= .970) between citizens with children and those without children.

Research Question 4

RQ4: Does media use by citizens differ by demographics?

Due to the small number of responses in some categories on the survey, citizens preferred communication was collapsed into the following groups: direct mail, Internet communication (website, Facebook, Twitter), email, and the local newspaper. A chi-square test was run to determine if a citizen's preferred method of communication from his or her government differed by gender. No significant relationship was found, c^2(3, N=304), .607, p = .895.

To determine if citizens preferred methods of communication differed by age, a chi-square test was run. Age was collapsed into two categories, under age 45 and age 45 and older. A significant relationship was found c^2 (3, N = 304) 23.176, p < .001. The adjusted residual is a measure that helps determine where differences occur. Adjusted residuals greater than 2 or less than -2 indicates a cell that differs from what is expected. In this case, respondents under age 45 are more likely to prefer Internet communication (the adjusted residual is 4.6), and respondents age 45 and over are more likely to prefer communication through their local newspapers (the adjusted residual is 2.5).

Chi –square tests were also run to determine if preferred communication differed between education groups. Education was collapsed into two categories, citizens without a college degree and citizens with a college degree. A significant relationship was found

$c^2(3, N=304)$ 10.942, $p = .012$. This indicates that respondents without a college degree are morel likely to prefer communication from local governments through their local newspapers (adjusted residual=2), and respondents with a college degree prefer internet-based communication (adjusted residual= 2.1).

To determine differences existed between the preferred communication methods of citizens with children and those without children, a chi-square test was used. No significant relationship was found $c^2(3, N=304)$ .915, $p = .822$.

Research Question 5

RQ5: To what extent do governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship?

The study's seventh research question sought to determine whether citizens and local government officials viewed the local government-citizen relationship similarly. The analysis revealed that there was disagreement between local government officials and citizens on all four relationship dimensions of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. Table 4-7 shows that local government officials view the relationship much more favorably among the relationship dimensions than citizens (i.e., mean scores higher than 4 on a 7-point scale). Local government officials provided the following direct perspectives of the relationship: control mutuality ($M = 6.28$), satisfaction ($M =$ 6.05, commitment ($M = 6.27$), and trust ($M = 6.22$). Citizens direct perspectives of the relationship are as follows: control mutuality ($M = 4.28$), satisfaction, ($M = 3.95$), commitment ($M = 4.35$, and trust ($M = 4.16$).

Table 4-7. Local Government Officials and Citizen Direct Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions

Relationship Dimension	Mean	SD
Citizen		
Control Mutuality	4.28	1.30
Satisfaction	3.95	1.39
Commitment	4.35	1.41
Trust	4.15	1.43
Local Government Official		
Control Mutuality	6.28	0.75
Satisfaction	6.05	0.85
Commitment	6.27	0.79
Trust	6.23	0.80

D-scores were also calculated for agreement between local governments and citizens on the quality of the relationship (D-score= 1.89). Lower levels of agreement indicate smaller discrepancies between what governments and citizens think.

Research Question 6

RQ6: To what extent do governments and citizens perceive agreement between themselves and the other side on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

This research question addressed each side of the local government-citizen relationship perceived agreement with the other side in the overall evaluation of the relationship. Table 4-8 and Table 4-9 present the comparisons between the citizens' views and their estimates of how local governments would answer the same question and also local government officials' views and their estimates of how citizens would answer the same question. Citizens perceived a significant difference in themselves and their local government on the evaluation of the relationship. The meta-perspectives of local government officials are as follows: control mutuality (M = 5.69), satisfaction (M = 5.51), commitment (M = 5.74), and trust (M = 5.59). The meta-perspectives of citizens on the evaluation of the local government- citizen relationship are as follows: control mutuality (M = 4.63), satisfaction (M = 4.50), commitment (M = 4.67), and trust (M = 4.59). A D-score was calculated at .656, which indicates the direct and meta scores of local government officials and citizens are very close.

Table 4-8. Local Citizen Meta - Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions

Relationship Dimension	Mean	SD
Control Mutuality	4.64	1.50
Satisfaction	4.50	1.54
Commitment	4.67	1.54
Trust	4.59	1.57

Table 4-9. Local Government Official Meta- Perspectives of the Relationship Dimensions

Relationship Dimension	Mean	SD
Control Mutuality	5.69	0.92
Satisfaction	5.51	1.01
Commitment	5.74	1.01
Trust	5.59	1.03

Research Question 7

RQ7: To what extent are governments and citizens accurate in predicting the other side's views on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

This question addressed the accuracy by each side in predicting the other side's view of the organization-public relationship, which was determined by subtracting the average meta perspective score of citizens (M = 4.59) among all four relationship dimensions — control mutuality (M = 4.63), satisfaction (M = 4.50), commitment (M = 4.67), and trust (M = 4.59) yields an average of 4.59 — from the average direct perspective score for local governments (M = 6.20) among all four relationship dimensions — control mutuality (M = 6.28), satisfaction (M = 6.05, commitment (M = 6.27), and trust (M = 6.22). This yielded a D-score of 1.61, revealing that citizens underestimated the views of local government officials regarding the quality of the relationship. To answer the seventh research question, both sides are accurate in predicting the other side's views, although local government officials overestimate the citizens' views and citizens underestimate the views local government officials have regarding the relationship.

Research Question 8

RQ8: What coorientation state exists between governments and citizens on the evaluation of the government-citizen relationship?

The results of the previous three research questions provide information to answer this study's final research question. A comparisons of the evaluations of the relationship

by both local government officials and citizens will reveal one of the coorientation states of consensus, dissensus, false consensus, and false conflict. Local government officials view the relationship more favorably than citizens — control mutuality (M = 6.28), satisfaction (M = 6.05, commitment (M = 6.27), and trust (M = 6.22) — and believe that citizens will not rate it as favorably as they do — control mutuality (M = 5.69), satisfaction (M = 5.51), commitment (M = 5.74), and trust (M = 5.59. From the citizen perspective, they rank the relationship lower than local government officials — control mutuality (M = 4.28), satisfaction, (M = 3.95), commitment (M = 4.35, and trust (M = 4.16). and believe that local government officials will rank it higher than they do — control mutuality (M = 4.63), satisfaction (M = 4.50), commitment (M = 4.67), and trust (M = 4.59). This shows that local government officials and citizens generally disagree on the evaluation of the relationship and are accurate in predicting the other side's view. Applying the coorientation states to these findings, the answer to the final research question is that local governments and citizens are generally in a state dissensus. Therefore, states of consensus, false conflict, and false consensus do not exist to as great a degree in the relationship.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research advances relationship management theory by utilizing a coorientational approach that examines both sides of the government-citizen relationship. Furthermore, this study extends the situational theory of publics in the local government realm by identifying common and preferred communication behaviors of citizens. To accomplish these objectives, eight research questions and five hypotheses were tested. Relevant academic studies are used to ground this discussion of the results obtained from this study. Before beginning the interpretation of the results from this research, a brief summary of the key findings is presented. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Results

Evaluation of the Government-Citizen Relationship

Research question one was asked to obtain an understanding of the attitudes of citizens regarding the local-government citizen relationship among the four relationship dimensions of trust, satisfaction, control mutuality and commitment. The question asked, "To what extent do citizens give local governments a favorable rating on the relationship dimensions." Surprisingly, the results of the data analysis in answering this question reveal that, for the most part, citizens have neutral attitudes concerning the government-citizen relationship. This finding is quite interesting considering that the local level of government is where citizens often feel most connected. This characteristic would

suggest that citizens would evaluate either negatively or positively the quality of the government-citizen relationship. These results closely mirror the findings from the pilot study where citizens evaluate the relationship as neutral. Future research should address whether a neutral evaluation should be acceptable for government since a primary role of citizens is to question government and keep them in check. To further understand the neutral evaluation of the government-citizen relationship by citizens from this current study, each relationship dimension is discussed in detail.

When looking at each relationship dimension, citizens evaluated commitment most favorably, followed by control mutuality, trust, and satisfaction. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as a form of brand loyalty and as "an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure it endures indefinitely" (p. 23). They maintain that commitment is a crucial component in relationship marketing. The fact that citizens evaluate commitment most favorably is not surprising given that citizens have an interest and responsibility to the viability of their local communities. This is the place where they have chosen to live and raise their families. This finding provides opportunities for local governments to improve this aspect of the relationship by promoting the benefits of the community and providing opportunities for participation and engagement. One way that governments can do this is by highlighting the many ways that local government operations, programs, and activities contribute to the quality of life experienced by their

citizens. In addition, promoting ways for citizens to get information and be involved may yield beneficial returns on the evaluation of the relationship.

Control mutuality is the "degree to which partners agree about which of them should decide relational goals and behavioral routines" (Stafford and Canary, 1991, p. 224). In the public relations context, Hon and Grunig (1999) defined control mutuality as "the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (p. 13). Control mutuality of this sense of a norm of reciprocity is crucial to obtaining a stable organization-public relationship, even if power asymmetry exists (Huang, 1997; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; L. Grunig et al., 1992). In this study, control mutuality received a neutral rating ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.30$). Citizens feel that they can do little to affect their local government. This finding is surprising given that a role of government in society is to promote democracy. Therefore, it would be expected that citizens would have stronger feelings regarding control mutuality. A reason for this could be that the majority of the time local governments are concerned with relatively non-controversial routine concerns such as providing public safety, attracting businesses to create new jobs, and paying attention to the infrastructure in the community (Grant, Dollery, & Gow, 2011). Hence, citizens would not expect to be able to contribute to the day-to-day operations of local governments in those types of capacities. It is only when something happens that directly affects their lives that citizens get involved (ushistory.org, 2014). For example, people often get involved when a company or organization that has a negative reputation or promotes something that they might not agree with buys the property next to them or when a home in close proximity to them is robbed or vandalized (ushistory.org, 2014).

To strengthen the control mutuality with citizens, local government officials should focus on symmetrical strategies to empower citizens and offer more opportunities for public input and involvement. The use of new communication technologies allows for symmetrical communication and is an easy and cost effective option for governments to utilize to promote and foster relationships with citizens. This perspective is attuned with the current thinking about the role communication plays in relationship-building, where healthy relationships between and organization and its stakeholders are cultivated through communication managed by public relations practitioners (Ledingham, 2003). Citizens who are disengaged can become reengaged through the use of new technologies. Norris (2004) asserts that new technologies can improve public representation by allowing citizens the ability to evaluate the records of governments and elected officials by providing the means for citizens to interact directly with government officials. Through technological innovations including the local government's website and social media, the government can easily make its operation more transparent and interactive and thereby generate a greater sense of trust and accountability (Picazo-Velo, Gutierrez- Martinez, Luna- Reyes, 2012). Specifically, to accomplish this local governments should have a person dedicated to updating their website and actively managing their social media sites. In addition, when citizens make inquiries or post feedback, their comments or questions need to be acknowledged and answered in a timely manner.

The evaluation on trust of local governments by citizens was very close to the evaluations of control mutuality. Hon and Grunig (1999) identified three underlying

dimensions of trust as: (a) integrity: "the belief that an organization is fair and just," (b) dependability: "the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do," and (c) competence: "the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do" (p. 19). The neutral evaluation of trust in the government-citizen relationship was somewhat unexpected since numerous studies have reported the decline of public trust in government, especially the federal government, for the last several decades and argued that one of the greatest challenges faced by governments is restoring the government-public relationship (e.g. Avery, G., Bedrosian, J., Brucchi, S. Dennis, L., Keane, J. & Koch, G, 1996; Jones, 2008; Keele, 2007; Orren, 1997; Wang & Wart, 2007). While the evaluations were neutral, this finding offers good news to local governments since evaluations of trust in government have historically shown low levels. A reason for this finding could be that citizens regard their state and local governments, as compared to the federal government, to be more responsive to the needs of the public and better equipped to solve problems quickly (Blendon, Benson, Morin, Altman, Brodie, Brossard, & James, 1997). To improve the evaluation of trust in local governments, public officials should routinely evaluate the attitudes and desires of their citizenries. In public relations, research is the first and arguably the most important component in developing a public relations campaign, and local governments need to gather this information about their operations in general or specific issues through surveys, forums, or other methods. The questions can be tailored to obtain the information that will help governments do their jobs better, and, hopefully, gain more of the public's trust. In addition, governments need to be open and honest when things go right and also when things go wrong. If a

government agency does something outstanding it needs to be publicized; conversely, if a local government agency makes a mistake or has a failure, it should discuss ways to keep similar incidents from happening in the future. Sometimes the public distrusts government because they have had one or two bad customer service experiences (Pica-Velo, Gutierrez- Martinez, Luna- Reyes, 2012). Local government agencies need to continually be working to improve their customer service processes and using feedback from citizens to make changes. These suggestions are minor but can lead to more positive evaluations of citizens about the integrity, competence, and dependability of their local governments.

The relationship dimension of satisfaction was evaluated least favorably and was slightly below the scale's neutral point. Generally, citizens have neutral, leaning toward unfavorable, feelings about their local government. Scholars in relationship management research have acknowledged that measuring satisfaction is complex; however, it was found to be the most frequently used indicator to portray relationship quality (Ki & Shin, 2006). As Ferguson (1984) pointed out, this relationship dimension is important in studying organization-public relationships because understanding what contributes to a key public's satisfaction with the organization could influence the strategies used in developing public relations programs. Relational satisfaction can be defined as "from a social exchange perspective, a satisfying relationship is one which the distribution of rewards is equitable and the relational rewards outweigh the cost" (Stafford and Canary, 1991, p. 225). Hon and Grunig (1999) identify a satisfying relationship as one in which the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs involved with being in the relationship.

To this end, local governments must devote resources toward the creation and maintenance of relationships with citizens. To do this, local governments must allocate money to their communication activities and have a dedicated and qualified person responsible for overseeing these initiatives. Local governments cannot arbitrarily say that they see the relationship with citizens as a priority without actually committing the resources to this process if they want to see positive results. In sum, citizen's satisfaction is likely to increase when the local government invests the time and resources needed to make the relationship stronger (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Huang (1997) purports that looking holistically at these four indicators of relational outcomes (i.e., control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment) reveals the essence of the organization-public relationship. Therefore, this national study shows that local government-citizen relationships from the perspective of citizens is neutral and dictates that local governments need to take proactive measures to make the feelings of citizens about their local governments more positive. Some public relations scholars have attempted to explore how the effective management of organization-public relationships is connected to more positive evaluations and outcomes of the relationship such as relationship building with key publics (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Hutton, 1999; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Ledingham, 2003), improved reputation (Bridges & Nelson, 2001; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001), and behavioral intent and actual behaviors (Bruning, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning & Lambe, 2002). The findings from the first two research questions for this study and a review of the aforementioned studies led to the development of the following

best practices list for local governments to follow in establishing positive outcomes for local government-citizen relationships. These strategies will improve trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality between local governments and citizens.

Strategies for establishing positive relationships with citizens:

1. Conduct transparent government practices regarding government operations and policy decisions. Let the public know how tax dollars are being spent and programs are prioritized.
2. Educate the public about local government processes and programs. Citizens who are more knowledgeable about their government will take a more active role.
3. Plan programs to attract a broad spectrum of citizens. Don't cater to just a few influential groups. Make sure the programs that are offered are developed around the needs of the citizens in the community. Make sure that government communication efforts reach all parts of the community and not just more influential community leaders. Appointed local government boards and committees need representation in line with the varying demographic characteristics of the community.
4. Develop positive relationships with members of the media. Having a pre-established rapport will make it easier for governments to work with journalists to get information out to the public. Consider holding a monthly breakfast or lunch with representatives from the local media to update them on local government programs and activities.

5. Engage citizens around community challenges and problem solving. Citizens who feel informed and empowered are more likely to be involved in government activities. Host community forums to get citizen participation and input.
6. Use technology to inform citizens. The local government website and social networking sites are inexpensive and effective ways to get information to citizens. Governments need to use these platforms strategically and need to have someone in the organization devoted to this task.
7. Use public platforms to receive public input and foster interaction. Public platforms, particularly social media, are a great way to engage citizens and get feedback on government services and programs.
8. Ensure that local government employees are providing good customer service. Employees are often the first line of interaction that citizens have with their governments, and if these interactions are positive it encourages a more positive relationship.
9. Network with opinion leaders and groups in the community who can assist in getting out information. Regularly attend and speak at community civic meetings and functions. If opposition groups exist, keep the lines of communication with them open and have regular meeting to hear their views and ideas.
10. Involve citizens in shaping the future of the community. When strategic planning or visioning sessions are held make sure that the public is aware and encouraged to participate. Appealing to the self-interests of citizens will lead to stronger

collaboration between them and their government. This can be accomplished through citizen involvement in planning for the future.

Communication Behaviors of Citizens

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), Hon and J. Grunig (1999), and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) have provided an explanation as to why publics develop relationships with organizations. They believe that when behavioral consequences exist between an organization and a group of people, the individual members of the group become labeled a "public" and engage in an organizations-public relationship. The situational theory of publics has been used to identify publics who have active communication behaviors (e.g. Heath, Bradshaw, & Lee, 2002; Major, 1993, 1998; Youngmeyer, 2002). Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified three independent variables that can be used to predict active communication behaviors of publics. The first variable, problem recognition, refers to the degree that people detect that something should be done about a situation and stop to think about what to do (Yang, 2007). The second independent variable, constraint recognition, refers to the extent that people perceive obstacles exist in a situation that limit their ability to do anything about the situation (Yang, 2007). Finally, level of involvement is the degree to which people connect and identify with a situation (Yang, 2007). In his situational theory of publics, J. Grunig (1997) identified two dependent variables he believed motivated active communication behaviors. The dependent variable of information seeking is defined as the active search for information that is used in decision-making situations (Yang, 2007). The dependent variable of information

processing is the passive attention to information that is primarily used in nondecision situations (Yang, 2007). The situational theory of publics is based on the belief that individual's actions are situational in nature and how they react is dependent on the situation the issue or situation that exists. As previously described in the literature review, publics are most likely to adopt active communication behaviors when they perceive high levels of involvement, high problem recognition, and low constraint recognition (J. Grunig, 1997). Applying these principles of the situational theory of publics allows communicators to identify which issues related to their organization are of greatest concern to their constituencies.

Accordingly, the third research question sought to identify the issues that are of greatest concern to citizens. Public safety received the highest ranking followed by the economy, taxes, education, public infrastructure, codes enforcement and parks, and recreation. These rankings were somewhat surprising given a 2010 national survey of local government officials (Governing Dynamic, 2010) showed that local governments rank the economy as the most important issue (44.5%) followed by city finances (24.8%), roads/transportation (9.3%), taxes (4.6%), education (2.6%), and codes enforcement (2.6%). Surprisingly, crime was ranked last (2.9%). These contrasting findings illustrate that there is a strong disconnect between the issues that local government officials think is important in the community and where citizens actually place their importance. This revelation offers great opportunities to local governments to begin placing an emphasis on communicating about the issues that are of greatest concern to citizens. By identifying which issues are of greatest concern to citizens, local governments can tailor

communication messages to address these concerns. For many years, some community leaders have hidden behind technology in responding to controversial or "hot" issues (Trivitt, 2010). Local governments need to use these digital technologies to their advantage by both putting out their own messages regarding the situation and also actively obtaining feedback from citizens to see what is important. The Internet is an inexpensive and convenient way for local governments to gather information without having to utilize more expensive forms of research. Doing regular environmental scanning for the local government will give provide local governments with information to allow them to dedicate their efforts in the areas that are of greatest concern to citizens.

This research study's first hypothesis posited that the more active the communication behaviors of citizens, the better the quality of the government-citizen relationship outcomes. Results of the data analysis yielded strong support for this hypothesis, which is congruent with other scholarly research. This result was not particularly surprising given that the majority of research regarding communication behaviors shows that active communication behaviors of publics are positively associated with the quality of the organization-public relational outcomes (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ferguson, 1984; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; Youngmeyer, 2002; Yang & J. Grunig, 2005).

The findings from the analysis of each communication activity addressed in this research- - level of involvement, problem recognition, and constraint recognition- - were not unexpected. With regard to level of involvement, citizens who are more highly involved with their local government were more accurate in predicting- through their

meta-analysis- the quality of the government-citizen relationship. Because they are more involved in their local community, they are likely more precise in gauging the true quality of the relationship. All of the relationship outcomes except trust may play a role in the level of involvement. Publics that perceive high control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction will feel more empowered more connected and more highly content with their communities, which leads to higher degrees of involvement (Ni, 2012).

When addressing problem recognition the findings suggest that citizens with stronger feelings about problems in their local government had higher relationship outcome scores for accuracy and agreement, signifying a more negative overall relationship. All of the relationship dimensions play important roles in problem recognition. Publics that are more satisfied, committed, and trusting are more likely to recognize problems and attempt to fix the problem (Ni, 2012).

Moreover, when looking at constraint recognition, the stronger feelings from citizens regarding their ability to make a difference in the community lead to more negative government-citizen relationships. This finding shows that publics do not perceive empowerment in solving potential problems that may exist, which contributes to the relationship quality. This finding is consistent with Ni's (2012) proposition that all of the relationship dimensions may negatively influence constraint recognition.

Management scholars have for many years emphasized the important role that quality relationships between an organization and its constituents has on organizational reputation (e.g. Fombrun, 1996; Rindova & Kotha, 2001; Fombrun & van Riel, 2003; Schult, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). While not specifically referring to communication

behaviors, it would be logical to assume that many of these same premises would impact and apply to communication behaviors as well. Therefore, in order to maintain a positive reputation, local governments need to actively engage with citizens and take the appropriate measures to create and maintain favorable relationships. For example, governments must promote ethical responsibility in decision- making, transparency, and consultation and engagement with primary stakeholders—citizens.

Hypothesis two predicted that the more familiar citizens are with government activities, the better the quality of the government-citizen relationship. This hypothesis was also supported, indicating that citizens who are more familiar with government activities rate the government-citizen relationship more positively. This is consistent with studies found in the marketing literature that suggests customers' relationship evaluations directly affected their behavioral intentions (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999, Perloff, 2003). The finding from this hypothesis suggests that it is imperative that local governments, through their communication activities, continually demonstrate how their operations improve the community and positively affect the lives of the citizens that it serves.

This study's third hypothesis predicted that high communication activity citizens are more likely to participate in government-sponsored and organized activities than low communication activity citizens. Although the situational theory of publics cannot predict the attitudes that public will have on an issue, the theory can be used to determine when publics will engage in behavior and whether or not it will be for or against an organization (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This aspect of the theory was evaluated by

measuring citizens' participation in local government programs and activities. It was not surprising that a citizen's level of involvement played a role in the how active he or she is in local government activities. In addition, the importance that citizens place on local government issues also factored into their level of participation in local government activities. These results make it clear that local governments should focus on programs and activities that are geared toward issues that are important to citizens.

It was hypothesized in H4 that high communication activity citizens would display significantly higher levels of information-seeking than moderate or low communication activity citizens. This hypothesis was supported. Consistent with Grunig's (1983) situational theory of publics, which states that high communication activity or active publics will seek information at a higher level than low communication activity or latent publics, high communication citizens reported a higher level of information-seeking than low communication citizens. Furthermore, this research found that citizens' level of involvement is significantly correlated with information-seeking. According to Grunig (1979), "publics will communicate most actively when they have a high perceived level of involvement in the situation" (p. 31). Additionally, problem recognition had a significant effect on information-seeking. Citizens that exhibited heightened levels of problem recognition also did more information-seeking. This follows the guidance from the literature on situational theory of publics that suggests that in almost all situations where a problem exists, a high level of involvement also exists (Grunig, 1979). Conversely, constraint recognition was negatively correlated to information-seeking. Citizens who felt more constrained about their ability to influence

change in government did less information seeking than citizens who felt they could influence change. These findings add to existing research on the situational theory of publics and hopefully provokes further investigation into the many reasons why people communicate. In addition, they support the situational theory of publics, such as previous literature, that found the level of communication activity to be a strong predictor of information-seeking behavior (Aldoory & Sha, 2007). Previous research suggests that organizations can communicate more easily with active than passive publics because they seek out information rather than passively receive it (Grunig & Repper, 1992). Passive stakeholders can become active, and governments should not ignore this group; however, practitioners working in local government should devote most of their resources and aim their programs toward active citizens.

The final hypothesis predicted that high communication activity citizens would display higher levels of information processing than low communication activity citizens. This final hypothesis was supported as well. Grunig's situational theory of publics predicts that all publics will process information (1989). Information processing is regarded as the random reception of messages about an issue. Similar to the findings from H4, citizens who have high levels of problem recognition and involvement do more information processing. Citizens who had low constraint recognition and felt that they could not impact local government demonstrated lower levels of information processing.

To summarize, the findings of this study's hypotheses related to communication behaviors overall is consistent with the propositions of the situational theory of publics (J. Grunig, 1997). Higher problem recognition, lower constraint recognition, and higher

levels of involvement were all associated positively with more active communication behaviors of citizens. This knowledge allows local government to develop communication campaigns that will appeal to the different segmentations, and in turn, provide the greatest results.

Age, gender, education level, and whether or not an individual has children could affect communication behaviors, and this line of thought led to the development of research question four, which asked if communication behavior as defined by situational theory differs by demographics. This line of thought contradicts J. Grunig's (1989) study of individuals involved in the Sierra Club that suggested there was no utility in looking at demographic characteristics in conjunction with situational theory variables. He pointed out, "Demographics serve as useful locators of publics and other publics in inner nests, although the segments identified by demographics usually do not overlap publics closely" (p. 222). The findings of this research reveal significant differences in communication behaviors or citizens when segmented by demographic categories. Specifically, males are significantly more involved in their local governments than females. In addition, citizens who were more educated were also more involved in local government activities. Older individuals revealed higher degrees of problem recognition in government than younger individuals. Similarly, citizens with children were more likely to recognize problems in their community than citizens without children. Recently, Lovari, Martino, and Kim (2012) conducted a study of citizens looking at problem recognition in their local community and found that age was the only demographic characteristic that had a significant effect on problem recognition. Their study found that older individuals had

higher levels of problem recognition than younger individuals (Lovari, Martino, & Kim, 2012). Many times demographics may be the only tool available to communication planners, and local governments should make use of this information to be able to gear their communication activities to the appropriate groups to prevent unfocused dissemination of information.

These findings illustrate the importance of segmenting audiences for local governments. Public relations scholars have suggested that understanding the diverse spectrum of publics through public segmentation is a first step that organizations need to take in developing their communication activities (Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Grunig, 1989; Grunig and Repper, 1992). This is important in building desirable relationships and to producing the desired communication behavior outcomes. Through segmentation, local governments can group citizens into more homogeneous segments and develop effective management strategies aimed at reaching these targeted citizen groups. Public relations practitioners working in local government need to incorporate this step into the research phase of the public relations process. This will ensure that local governments are projecting their efforts and resources in the correct direction to ultimately achieve the desired result.

Research question five asked, "Does media use by citizens differ by demographics?" The overarching answer to this question is that yes, media use by citizens differs depending on demographic characteristics. This is consistent with previous research that asserts that media use is a powerful predictor of individual behaviors as well and can be considered a criterion for segmenting publics by specific

issues (Hofstetter, Schultze, & Mulvihill, 992; Rodgers, Chen, Duffy, & Fleming, 2007). Uncovering the pattern of media use according to various demographics of citizens enables local governments to effectively target and reach specific groups. Since there is a multitude of issues surrounding a local government at any given time, media is the key tool to connect the public with government and provides an outlet for publics to be informed of governmental issues and a means by which they can express their opinions (Hong, Park, Lee, & Park, 2012). The results of this research indicate citizens' media preferences are not impacted by gender. With regard to age, citizens age 45 and younger prefer Internet communication, and citizens over the age of 45 prefer more traditional forms of communication, such as newspapers. In this study, Internet communication included website, Facebook, and Twitter. This finding is not surprising given a recent Pew Research Survey (2013) that showed 58 percent of Internet users under the age of 50 use social networking sites compared to just 11 percent of those over the age of 50.

Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between the education level of citizens and their preferred types of communication. Citizens without a college degree prefer communication from their local governments to come through the traditional channel of the local newspaper. Conversely, citizens with a college degree prefer Internet-based communications. The same Pew Research survey (2013) above found that there was not much difference between the social networking site use of individuals without a college degree, 37 percent, compared to 42 percent of those who have a college degree.

Coorientation State Evaluation

A primary contribution that this study makes to public relations scholarship is the symmetrical measurement of the organization-public relationship. A multitude of studies have measured the relationship from one side, mainly that of the external publics, even though scholars have for several decades called for the symmetrical approach (Ferguson, 1984; Seltzer, 2007; Ledingham and Bruning, 1998). As Seltzer (2007) states, "study after study tiptoes around the coorientational approach without utilizing the perceptions of both the organization and its publics in measuring the relationship between them" (p. 14). By utilizing the coorientatonal approach, this research provides important information and implications to local governments concerning the status of the local government-citizen relationship. The use of the coorientational approach makes it possible to move beyond the simple measure of an organization's direct perspective and addresses the meta-perspectives of both sides, which allows for a more accurate and complete view of the true state of the relationship.

Thus, the sixth research question addresses the extent that governments and citizens agree on the evaluation of the quality of the government-citizen relationship. The results indicate that there is disagreement between local government officials and citizens in their evaluations of the local government-citizen relationship, and this disagreement exists among all four dimensions of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. Local government officials view the relationship much more favorably than citizens. When looking at the evaluations of local government officials, control

mutuality was viewed most favorably. Satisfaction was the relationship dimension with the lowest mean score for both local government officials and citizens.

These differing results for local governments and citizens is intriguing, though not surprising, given the state of politics in America. The decline of public trust in government that has been reported for the last several decades points to a deteriorating government-public relationship. In the United States, trust in the federal government has dropped from 73% in the 1950's to 25% in the 1990's, and citizens have been cynical about government for quite some time (Blendon et al., 1997). In 2007 survey, Americans reported that their trust in government was less than a two on a seven-point scale ranging from one to seven, where a higher score indicates more trust in government (Schario & Konisky, 2008). Meanwhile, local and state governments tend to fare a little better in the amount of trust that citizens place in them (Blendon et al., 1997; Orren, 1997; Schario & Konisky, 2008), but there is still much room for improvement in this area.

Practitioners are encouraged in the public relations literature to be boundary spanners. In this role they are encouraged to keep one foot in the organization and one foot outside of the organization at all times. This approach allows them to keep abreast of both internal and external sentiments and changes that affect their organizations. These findings illustrate that practitioners working in local governments need to do a better job in their boundary-spanning role. It is apparent that they do not have a solid reading on the attitudes and perceptions of citizens and need to do a better job in this regard.

The seventh research question examined how accurate citizens and local government officials were with their estimates of the other sides views. Specifically, it evaluates the extent that governments and citizens perceive agreement between themselves and the other side on the four relationship dimensions. Looking at it in this way reveals the utility and strength of the coorientation measurement. In this case, the meta-perspective of citizens (i.e. how they thought the local government views the relationship) was only slightly different from each citizen's direct perspective. Citizens reported that local governments would evaluate the relationship more favorably than they do. In turn, the meta-perspective of local governments officials (how they think citizens will evaluate the relationship) was starkly different from their own direct perspectives, with local government officials believing that citizens would rate the relationship lower than local government officials, which was indeed the case. Interestingly, while local government officials felt that citizens would rate the relationship lower than they do, in actuality citizen evaluations of the relationship were much lower than local government officials expected. Coupled with measures from the direct perspectives, it becomes clear that while both sides generally are accurate in predicting the other side's views, there is a state of disagreement between the two groups. Local government officials underestimate citizens views, and citizens overestimate the views local government officials have regarding the local government-citizen relationship. Essentially, there is a gap, and the gap is recognized by both parties-- local government officials and citizens-- both sides just underestimate how large the gap is. Taken altogether from the viewpoint of citizens, a state of true disagreement exists between them and their local governments.

The final research question addressed the coorientation state that exists between local governments and citizens on the evaluation of the local government-citizen relationship. Reviewing the findings from this research indicates that local governments and citizens are generally in a state of dissensus. Dozier and Ehling (1992) say that a state of dissensus exists when "dominant coalitions and publics hold conflicting views about an issue and both parties are aware of the disagreement (p. 180). Local government officials view the relationship more favorably than citizens and believe that citizens will not rate it as favorably as they do; yet, they underestimate how low citizens actually rank the relationship. From the citizen perspective, citizens believe that local government officials will rank the relationship more favorably than they do; however, they underestimate how favorably local government officials actually view the relationship. This illustrates the benefit of using the coorientational approach where the relationship is not defined by one party's view, but is determined by the shared perceptions of all parties in the relationship.

Theoretical Implications

This study assessed the relationship between the two theories and expanded the boundaries of the relationship management paradigm by providing a greater understanding of the local government-citizen relationship. Furthermore, this study provided additional validation of the Hon and J. Grunig (1999) relationship dimension scale and is the first study to test the impact of communication behaviors using the situational theory of publics on the evaluation of the organization-public relationship. It

also provided a new scale that can be used to measure the relationship that exists between governments and citizens. Additionally, it introduced the measurement for both sides of the government-citizen relationship to allow for greater understanding the levels of agreement and disagreement that exists regarding specific elements of the relationship. Together, these advances of the organization-public relationship, utilized in this study, introduce new thoughts about how previous scholarship has approached this topic and raises questions about how they will be utilized in the future.

Relationship Management Theory

Aside from contributing to public relations theory in general, this research adds to organization-public relationship theory. Adding a local government component to organization-public relationship theory was studied by Ledingham (2001), and this research expands this view by utilizing the Hon- Grunig (1999) organization- public relationship measurement scale. This study shows that the Hon- Grunig (1999) Relationship Measurement scale is appropriate and reliable in the local government-citizen context. The four relationship dimensions have been examined many times in public relations scholarship and have been proven to be reliable and valid indices of the relationship that exists in investor relations, consumer relations, fundraising, and, now, local governments. The neutral finding from this current research contrasts the organization-public relationship research of Waters (2007) and O'Neil (2007), who both studied the relationship between a nonprofit organization and donors and found that donors, the public side of the organization, evaluated the relationship positively. This difference is notable; however, it would logically be expected that donors would evaluate

the relationship positively since, as donors, they would have a highly vested interest in the organization. In the report that guided this research, "Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations," the sample study that most closely compares to the relationships examined in this study is the relationship that exists between General Electric and consumers (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Overall, consumers for General Electric evaluated the relationship to be primarily neutral, with commitment and control mutuality evaluated just slightly below the scale's neutral point (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Furthermore, organization-public relationship theory has been criticized for not measuring the true relationship, instead only measuring the how one party perceives its relationship with the other party. Analyzing the relationship this could present an "elite bias" because the organization is only receiving information about how the public views the relationship but not vice versa (Broom et al, 1997; Kim, 2001). To obtain a better understanding of relationship management, and in turn advance the theoretical interpretations, it is important to evaluate all types of relationships, including good, bad, well developed, and poorly developed. This research captures the true essence of the local government-citizen relationship by using a coorientational approach. In his dissertation, Seltzer (2007) highlighted the need to measure the whole relationship that results from the shared perspectives of all parties involved and not just one side in an effort to represent the entire construct. Furthermore, he believed that the relational perspective and relationship management theory should be developed around a central unit of analysis and implementing the coorientational approach can accomplish this objective.

The use of the coorientation methodology for measuring the organization-public relationship that was used in this research and the findings herein reveal several important implications for relationship management theory. First, this research found that overall citizens perceived the highest level of commitment and lowest level of satisfaction with their local governments. This is inconsistent with the findings in previous research where control mutuality was the weakest indicator among the relationship indices (Hon & Brunner, 2002). The type of organization, local governments, could be the reason or this difference. Citizens tend to have negative feelings about governments; therefore, in looking at the organization-public relationship the type of organization should be taken into account in the analysis. In addition, using the coorientational approach to measure organization-public relationships provides information in public relations that allows practitioners to develop and implement communications programs aimed at correcting the differences that exist between an organization and its publics and possibly changing the orientation that exists, since the study of relationships has emerged as one of the dominant paradigms in public relations research (Broom, 2005), looking at the relationships from both sides can provide the organization, and in this case local governments, with the necessary date to use to create programs and campaigns aimed at creating and maintaining relationships.

Situational Theory of Publics

As predicted by the hypothesis related to the situational theory of publics, positive relationships exist between problem recognition and level of involvement and citizens'

information seeking and processing information regarding their local government. Grunig states, "people seldom seek out information about situations that do not involve them" (p. 11). This was certainly confirmed by this research. In a recent article, Kim and Ni (2013) proposed innovative ways to use existing theories such as the situational theory of publics. They suggested that instead of using in in the formative research stage of a communications campaign, the principles of public segmentation could also be used as an evaluative measure of the effectiveness of the campaign. In sum, the change in the type or activeness of publics might be good indicators of the success of the campaign and whether it influenced the perceptual variables that exist regarding the way publics evaluate certain issues.

While there have been studies that have looked at the situational theory of publics in relation to politics and assessing where citizens stand on political issues and candidate approval (Hamilton, 1992), no studies have been conducted that have utilized the situational theory of publics in the local government-citizen context. Specifically, there have not been any studies in public relations that have analyzed citizens as a public for local governments.

Limitations

Like most academic studies, this research has some inherent limitations. The first area of greatest concern regards limitations due to looking at local government-citizen relationship holistically and not just focusing on one local government and its citizens. This research can provide the general sentiments from local government officials and

citizens, but the findings might not hold true if looking at individual communities. A primary takeaway from this research for local governments is that, for the most part, citizens do not feel that they have a good relationship with their government. In addition, the issues that local governments perceive as important may not be the same issues that citizens value. From this, local governments need to do an audit of their communication initiatives to evaluate if they are allocating their time and resources in the areas that will foster and improve relationships with citizens.

Another limitation in the study is the use of participants working in a range of capacities within city offices. Although screening questions insured their general knowledge or awareness of local government activities, participants may not be aware of the exact nature and extent. This could lead to some inaccuracies in the finding because the individuals completing the surveys may not have had the institutional knowledge necessary to correctly answer the questions.

A third limitation to this research surrounds the use of an online survey for data collection. An online survey provides many advantages such as affordability, recruitment speed for data collection, and an adequate sampling frame. Specifically, the use of an online survey may have contributed to non-response problems. Given that it is an online survey, perhaps those with that are more Internet savvy or have a predisposition to online use were more likely to take the time to reply. The large, national representativeness of this compensates somewhat for this shortcoming, however.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

RELATIONSHIP MEASURES

(Source: Hon and Grunig, 1999)

Control Mutuality:

1. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
2. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
3. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
4. My local government gives citizens adequate input into the decision-making process
5. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern
6. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern

Satisfaction:

7. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
8. I feel informed about my local government and its services
9. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with their local government.
10. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
11. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with their local government.

Commitment:

12. Compared to other government organizations, I value my relationship with my local government the most.
13. The public would rather work with the organization than not.
14. I feel that the local government is trying to maintain a long term commitment to the public.
15. I can see that my local government want to maintain a relationship with citizens.

Trust:

16. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
17. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.
18. I feel confident about the governments management of the local
19. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
20. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.

Appendix B

COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR MEASURES

(Sources: Hamilton, 2001; Hung, 2002)

Information Seeking:

1. Please circle a number that indicates how likely you would be to engage in the following information seeking activities to obtain information about your local government.
    a. Newspaper
    b. Local television news
    c. Local government website
    d. Radio
    e. Social media
    f. Friends/ family

2. Please circle the number that best describes the frequency with which you use the following sources to gather information on your local government. (endpoints: never- very frequently)
    a. Newspaper
    b. Local television news
    c. Local government website
    d. Radio
    e. Social media
    f. Friends/ family

3. Please circle the number that best describes how likely you are to use the following forms of communication to seek information about your local government. (endpoints: very unlikely- very likely)
    a. Newspaper
    b. Local television news
    c. Local government website
    d. Radio
    e. Social media
    f. Friends/ family

Information Processing

1. I will pay attention to information about my local government, but will not actively seek it out.

Problem Recognition

2. I believe there are serious problems in my local government?
3. How important to you are the following issues: (endpoints: not important- very important)
    a. Education
    b. Public Safety
    c. Public Infrastructure
    d. Taxes
    e. Economy
    f. Parks and Recreation
    g. Codes Enforcement

Constraint Recognition

4. There are things that I can do personally that would make a difference in how my local government operates.
5. I do not understand issues related to my local community.
6. I do not have the ability to influence decisions concerning my local community.

Level of Involvement

7. I have strong opinions about local government issues.
8. I am a participant in activities or initiative of my local government.
9. Which of the following government services or programs have you participated in?
    a. Town Hall Meeting
    b. Serving on a board or commission
    c. Voting in an election
    d. Attending a local government sponsored activity or event. (festival, concert)
    e. None

Appendix C

Pilot Test Survey (Citizens)

SECTION 1:

Below are several statements about the relationship that exists between YOUR local government and the citizens that reside in YOUR community.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

21. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
22. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
23. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
24. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with their local government.
25. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
26. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
27. I feel confident about the governments management of the local community
28. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern
29. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern
30. I feel informed about my local government and its services
31. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with their local government.
32. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
33. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.
34. Compared to other government organizations, I value my relationship with my local government the most.
35. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
36. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.

Section 2:

In this section, please estimate how members of YOUR local government would respond to the same set of statements. In your opinion, how would and elected official in your community respond to these statements?

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "An elected official in my community would strongly disagree" and 7 means "An elected official in my community would strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

37. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
38. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
39. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
40. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with their local government.
41. Citizens feel very confident about the capabilities of their local government officials.
42. Generally speaking, citizens are pleased with the relationship they have with their local government.
43. Citizens feel confident about the local governments management of the local community
44. Citizens have access to local government officials when they have a concern
45. Citizens have access to local government staff members when they have a concern
46. Citizens feel informed about their local government and its services
47. Citizens believe most people are happy in their interactions with their local government.
48. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
49. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.
50. Compared to other government organizations, citizens value their relationship with their local government the most.
51. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
52. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.

Section 3:

Below are a few questions about the type of contact that you have with your local government.

1. Which of the following government services or programs have you participated in?
    a. Town Hall Meeting

   b. Serving on a board or commission
   c. Voting in an election
   d. Attending a local government sponsored activity or event. (festival, concert)
   e. None

2. What is the best way for your local government to communicate with you?
   a. Direct mail
   b. Local government website
   c. Social media
   d. Email
   e. Water/ Sewer/ Electric Bill
   f. Local newspaper

3. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is very negative and 7 is very positive, in general how would you characterize these experiences with members of your local government?

   Please mark all that apply:
   a. Visited the local government website
   b. Read a press release issued by your local government
   c. Called a local government office
   d. Wrote an email or letter to a local government official
   e. Talked face to face with a member of your local government
   f. Visited a local government department office

Section 4:
Thank you for your patience. Please answer the following general background questions to conclude the survey.

1. Are you male or Female?
   a. Male
   b. Female
2. How old are you?

3. How many years of education do you have?
   a. Some high school
   b. High School diploma
   c. Some college
   d. Bachelor's degree
   e. Master's Degree/ professional
   f. PhD
4. Do you rent or own your home?
   a. Rent

   b. Own
5. What is your annual household income?

6. Did you vote in the last election?

This concludes the survey. Thanks you for your time and participation.

Appendix D

Main Study Surveys

Local Government Official Version

SECTION 1:

Below are several statements about the relationship that exists between your local community and its citizens.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

1. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
2. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
3. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
4. My local government gives citizens adequate input into the decision-making process.
5. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern.
6. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern.
7. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
8. I feel informed about my local government and its services.
9. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with their local government.
10. Local government officials listen to what citizens say.
11. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with their local government.
12. The public would rather work with local government agencies and officials than not.
13. My local government is maintaining a long-term commitment to the public.
14. My local government wants to maintain a relationship with citizens.
15. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
16. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.
17. I feel confident about the local government's management of my community.
18. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
19. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.

SECTION 2:

In this section, please estimate how citizens in your community would respond to the same set of statements. In your opinion, local citizens respond to these statements?

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "A citizen in my community would strongly disagree" and 7 means "A citizen in my community would strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

CITIZENS IN YOUR COMMUNITY would respond to the following statements how?

20. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
21. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
22. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
23. My local government gives citizens adequate input into the decision-making process.
24. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern.
25. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern.
26. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
27. I feel informed about my local government and its services.
28. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with our local government.
29. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
30. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with our local government.
31. Compared to other government organizations, I value my relationship with my local government the most.
32. The public would rather work with the organization than not.
33. My local government is trying to maintain a long term commitment to the public.
34. My local government wants to maintain a relationship with citizens.
35. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
36. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.
37. I feel confident about the local governments management of the community.
38. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
39. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.

SECTION 3:

Thank you for your continued interest. Please answer the following general background questions to conclude the survey.

40. What do you feel is the best way for local governments to communicate with citizens?
    a. Direct mail
    b. Local government website
    c. Facebook
    d. Twitter
    e. Email
    f. Water/ Sewer/ Electric Bill
    g. Local newspaper
    h. Other_____

41. Are you male or Female?
    a. Male
    b. Female

42. What is your age?

43. What is your race?
    a. Caucasian
    b. African-American
    c. American Indian
    d. Asian
    e. Hispanic
    f. Pacific Islander
    g. Other

44. How many years of education do you have?
    a. Some high school
    b. High School diploma
    c. Some college
    d. Bachelor's degree
    e. Master's Degree/ professional
    f. PhD

45. How many years have you worked for or been elected to office for your local government?

46. What is your title?

47. What is the population of your community?

a. 300,000 +
b. 200,000-299,999
c. 100,000-199,000
d. 50,000-99,999
e. 30,000-49,999
f. 10,000-29,999
g. 5,000-9,999
h. Less than 5,000

47. What is the form of your government?
a. Mayor-Council
b. Council-Mayor
c. Commission
d. Representative Town Meeting
e. Other_____

48. How would you classify your community?
a. Urban (50,000 or more people)
b. Urban Cluster (densely population with more than 2,500 and less than 50,000 people)
c. Rural
d. Other_____

This concludes the survey. Thanks you for your time and participation.

Appendix E

Main Study Surveys

Citizen Version

SECTION 1:

Below are several statements about the relationship that exists between YOUR local government and the citizens that reside in YOUR community.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

53. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
54. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
55. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
56. My local government gives citizens adequate input into the decision-making process.
57. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern.
58. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern.
59. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
60. I feel informed about my local government and its services.
61. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with their local government.
62. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
63. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with our local government.
64. Compared to other government organizations (state government or federal government), I value my relationship with my local government the most.
65. The public would rather work with local government agencies and officials than not.
66. My local government is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to the public.
67. My local government wants to maintain a relationship with citizens.
68. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
69. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.
70. I feel confident about the local government's management of the community.

71. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
72. Local government officials (ex: elected officials, department heads) have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.

SECTION 2:

In this section, please estimate how members of YOUR local government would respond to the same set of statements. In your opinion, how would and elected official in your community respond to these statements?

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "An elected official in my community would strongly disagree" and 7 means "An elected official in my community would strongly agree."

[Respondent answers by clicking on a 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Neither agree nor disagree, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree.]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY would respond to the following statements how?

73. My local government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
74. My local government believes the opinions of citizens are important.
75. I feel very confident about the capabilities of my local government officials.
76. My local government gives citizens adequate input into the decision-making process.
77. I have access to local government officials when I have a concern.
78. I have access to local government staff members when I have a concern.
79. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship I have with my local government.
80. I feel informed about my local government and its services.
81. I believe most citizens are happy in their interactions with their local government.
82. Local government officials really listen to what citizens say.
83. Most citizens are happy with their interactions with our local government.
84. Compared to other government organizations (state or federal), I value my relationship with my local government the most.
85. The public would rather work with the local government agencies and officials than not.
86. My local government is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to the public.
87. My local government wants to maintain a relationship with citizens.
88. Local government officials treat citizens fairly and justly.
89. Citizens and local governments have a mutually beneficial relationship.
90. I feel confident about the local governments management of the community.

91. Whenever government officials make important decisions, I know they are concerned about people like me.
92. Local government officials have the ability to accomplish what they say they will do.

SECTION 3:

This section asks questions about communication behaviors regarding your local government.

93. Please circle a number that indicates how likely you would be to engage in the following information-seeking activities to obtain information about your local government.

94. Please circle the number that best describes the importance you place on each of the following as a source to gather information on your local government. (endpoints: never- very frequently)
    a. Newspaper
    b. Local television news
    c. Local government website
    d. Radio
    e. Facebook
    f. Twitter
    g. Friends/ family
    h. Other

95. Please circle the number that best describes how likely you are to use the following forms of communication to seek information about your local government. (endpoints: very unlikely- very likely
        g. Newspaper
        h. Local television news
        i. Local government website
        j. Radio
        k. Facebook
        l. Twitter
        m. Friends/ family

96. I pay attention to information about my local government. (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

97. I actively seek out information regarding my local government (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

98. How much attention would you give the following headlines if you read them in a newspaper or on a website. (endpoints: Not very much attention- A lot of attention)
    a. Local government recommends a 5% property tax increase.
    b. Local public swimming pools open next weekend.
    c. Major thoroughfare planned to reduce congestion on local roadways.
    d. School System budget gets cut by $1 million.
    e. Employment rate is on the rise locally.

99. There are serious problems in my local government? (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

100. How important to you are the following issues: (endpoints: not important- very important)
    a. Education
    b. Public Safety
    c. Public Infrastructure
    d. Taxes
    e. Economy
    f. Parks and Recreation
    g. Codes Enforcement

101. I can affect government operations if I want to. (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

102. I do not have the ability to influence decisions concerning my local community. (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

103. I have strong opinions about local government issues. (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

104. I am a participant in activities or initiatives of my local government. (endpoints: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree)

105. Which of the following government services or programs have you participated in?
    a. Attending a Town Hall/ City Council meeting
    b. Serving on a board or commission
    c. Voting in an election
    d. Attending a local government sponsored activity or event. (festival, concert)
    e. Contacting an official about an issue important to you,
    f. None

106. What is your preferred way for your local government to communicate with you?
    a. Direct mail
    b. Local government website
    c. Facebook
    d. Twitter
    e. Email
    f. Water/ Sewer/ Electric Bill
    g. Local newspaper
    h. Other

107. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is very negative and 7 is very positive or NA if you have not done it, in general how would you characterize these experiences with your local government?
    a. Visited the local government website
    b. Read a press release issued by your local government
    c. Called a local government office
    d. Wrote an email or letter to a local government official
    e. Talked face to face with a member of your local government
    f. Visited a local government department office

SECTION 4:
Thank you for your participation. Please answer the following general background questions to conclude the survey.

108. Are you male or Female?
    a. Male
    b. Female
109. What is your age?

110. What is your total household income?
    a. Less than $10,000
    b. $10,000-$24,999

c. $25,000-$34,999
d. $35,000-$49,999
e. $50,000-$74,999
f. $75,000-$99,999
g. $1000,000-$149,999
h. $150,000 or more

111. What is your race?
a. Caucasian
b. African-American
c. American Indian
d. Asian
e. Hispanic
f. Pacific Islander
g. Other

112. How many years of education do you have?
a. Some high school
b. High School diploma
c. Some college
d. Bachelor's degree
e. Master's Degree/ professional
f. PhD

113. Do you rent or own your home?
a. Rent
b. Own

114. Marital Status
a. Married
b. Single
c. Domestic partnership
d. Divorced
e. Widowed

115. Do you have children?
a. Yes
b. No

116. If you answered that you have children, please indicate how many.

117. Did you vote in the last local election?
a. Yes
b. No

c. Don't know

118. What is your political party affiliation?
a. Republican
b. Democrat
c. Independent
d. No affiliation

119. How many years have you lived in the community?

This concludes the survey. Thanks you for your time and participation.

VITA

Melissa Wooten Graham is a third year doctoral student at the University of Tennessee majoring in communication and information with an emphasis in public relations. Her research interests include political public relations, strategic communication, and crisis communications. Prior to going back to school to work on her Ph.D., she spent over a decade working in public relations in the government and non-profit arenas.

This past summer, Ms. Graham and her family moved to Oklahoma and she is excited to start a position as an assistant professor teaching strategic communication in the College of Business at the University of Central Oklahoma in the fall.