

Evolution of the Manager Role in Public Relations Practice

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We conducted a comparison of public relations manager role enactment in 1979 and 1991. Using independent systematic samples of Public Relations Society of America members in 1979 ($N = 440$) and 1991 ($N = 203$), variables related to role enactment were tested in a causal model and compared over time (12 years). Key elements of the causal model remained constant. Gender (male) is positively related to professional experience; professional experience is positively related to predominant manager role enactment. Predominant manager role enactment, in turn, is positively related to participation in management decision making. Decision-making participation is positively related to both salary and job satisfaction. Key changes over time involve reduction in indicators of gender role segregation and salary discrimination. Specifically, gender (male) is positively related to predominant manager role enactment in 1979, after controlling for professional experience. In 1991, this residual variance is reduced to an insignificant level. In 1979, significant salary differences between men and women remain, after controlling for professional experience, manager role enactment, and decision-making participation. Arguably, such residual difference in salaries indicates gender salary discrimination. In 1991, this residual difference in salary is reduced to an insignificant level.

In the conduct of inquiry about public relations practices, perhaps no concept has proven so theoretically and empirically useful as *organizational role*. The roles that public relations practitioners enact are "at the nexus of a network of concepts affecting professional achievements of practitioners, structures and processes of the function in organizations, and organizational capacities to dominate or cooperate with their environments" (Dozier, 1992,

p. 327). Practitioner roles are indicators of the power of the public relations units in organizations (Lauzen, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Roles indicate whether public relations units participate in strategic decision making of the dominant coalition or simply execute decisions made by others (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier, 1986). Roles are linked to environmental scanning (Dozier, 1987, 1990), issues management (Lauzen, 1993), and models of public relations practices (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1989). Roles contribute to the salaries of public relations practitioners and how much satisfaction practitioners derive from public relations work (Broom & Dozier, 1986). Of the 1,700 individual characteristics of 283 organizations examined in the Excellence Study (J. E. Grunig, 1992; International Association of Business Communicators [IABC] Research Foundation, 1991), knowledge to enact the manager role was the single most powerful correlate of excellence in public relations and communication management.

The concept of role also plays a pivotal role in the empirical and normative debate about gender discrimination in public relations work. Prior research indicates that segregation of women in the technician role contributes to salary differences between male and female practitioners (Dozier, Chapo, & Sullivan, 1983). On the one hand, some argue that such documented gender differences in salary are misinformation perpetuated by feminists in support of a larger political agenda (Hutton, 1993). On the other hand, some argue that roles research trivializes and devalues the largely technical work that women do in public relations (Creedon, 1991).

In the present study, we examine a model of public relations practices that links gender, professional experience, and education of practitioners to roles they enact in organizations. Role enactment is influenced by the number of practitioners in the public relations unit. Role enactment, in turn, affects practitioner participation in decision making of the dominant coalition. Role enactment and decision-making participation, in turn, affect practitioners' salaries and the satisfaction they derive from their work. Comparable samples of practitioners from 1979 and 1991 are analyzed to see if the model has evolved over the intervening 12 years. Based on an analysis of that evolutionary process, we cautiously enter the normative debate over sex discrimination in public relations work.

THE CONCEPT OF ROLE

In their seminal work on organizations, Katz and Kahn (1978) gave the "role concept a central place in our theory of organizations," defining *human organizations* as "role systems" (p. 186). Katz and Kahn defined *role behavior* as "recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome" (p. 189). An *organizational role* is an abstraction—a conceptual order imposed by the observer on the many different activities of individuals in organizations. As

such, the abstractions of roles are created more than discovered; the value of these abstractions rests on their utility to help scholars make sense of organizational behavior, its antecedence, and its consequences.

We view organizational roles as central to our model of public relations practices and to our theory of the public relations function in organizations. Specifically, we define *public relations* as the "management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, p. 4). Arguably, this definition is more normative than positive, for it describes a function that is more than—and different from—the myriad of activities commonly labeled *public relations* in organizations. As a management function, public relations must participate in the governance of organizations. Participation can take the form of a communication liaison role; the practitioner creates opportunities for management and key publics to communicate with each other. Participation can involve a role of facilitating processes whereby the dominant coalition (including public relations management) makes decisions about public relations issues. Participation also can take the form of expert prescription; the practitioner makes policy decisions about the organization's public relations programs and is held accountable for their success or failure.

We explicitly exclude the term *communication* from our definition of the public relations function because communication, especially mediated communication, is but one tool used to bring about the functional outcomes of mutually beneficial relationships. Environmental scanning, issues management, program monitoring, and impact evaluation are all tasks as central to the function as is communication through the media. That is, we accept J. E. Grunig's (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) two-way models of public relations as integral to the function. The public relations function is key to organizational feedback, acting as the eyes and ears of organizations as well as their mouthpieces.

The technical task of creating and disseminating communication, especially mediated communication, is core to the public relations function. As our research has shown (Broom & Dozier, 1986), some practitioners build their careers around this creative specialization and exhibit high levels of job satisfaction in the stability of technician role enactment over time. The *creative artistic* practitioner seems to gravitate toward technician role enactment (Dozier & Gottesman, 1982).

In roles research, the concept of predominant role has proved useful. If a practitioner enacts activities of the manager role set with greater frequency than activities of the technician role set, then the practitioner can be categorized as a manager. By the same logic, technicians are so classified because they enact technician role activities more frequently than manager role activities. As conceptualized and operationalized, however, each public relations practitioner enacts activities of both the manager and technician roles. Enacting one role does not preclude enacting the other role; the two role sets

are independent (orthogonal). Manager and technician role activities are different but neither mutually exclusive nor in opposition to each other.

We make a mesolevel (organizational) value judgment when we assert that public relations is a management function. This normative prescription is not a microlevel (individual) value judgment. Whereas the function should participate in dominant coalition decision making, individual practitioners should engage in a range of role activities that match talent, preferences, and needs of the public relations unit. Individual practitioners should have some choice of role enactment, free of institutionalized patterns of gender segregation and discrimination. (We return to this point in the Conclusions section of this article.) Practitioner roles provide a useful way to link individual attributes of practitioners and characteristics of the public relations unit to the function's participation in the management of organizations. This participation, in turn, has consequences for individual practitioners.

THE THEORETICAL MODEL

The theoretical model in Figure 1 posits relations among attributes of practitioners, organizational attributes, and the roles that practitioners enact in organizations. Antecedent to all concepts in the model is practitioner gender, a proxy measure for differential patterns of socialization and differential patterns of opportunities (or denial of opportunities) in organizations. Gender is linked to different levels of professional experience and length of employment (tenure) with current employer. This is due to the radical transformation of the public relations labor force. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the public relations labor force shifted from less than 44% women in 1979 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980, p. 174) to over 56% women in 1991 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1992, p. 186). Today, public relations remains an occupation with a majority of women in its workforce (about 59%).

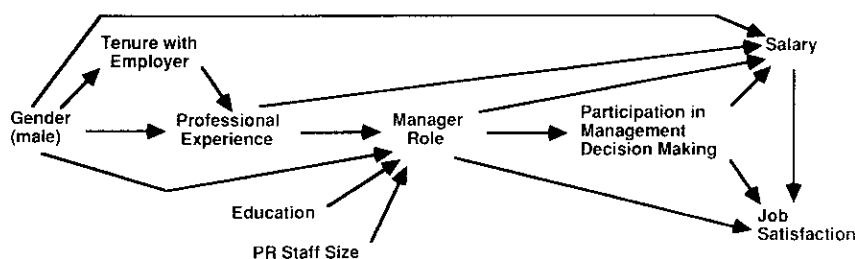


FIGURE 1 Model linking practitioner attributes to professional outcomes using role enactment.

As a consequence, male practitioners (as a group) possess many more years of professional experience in public relations and related mass media work. They also have been employed longer in their present job. The model posits that gender is related to professional experience and that professional experience affects the occupational role enacted. In addition, the model posits that gender exerts an influence on role enactment, independent of professional experience. Specifically, men are more likely than women to enact the manager role predominantly, even if differences in professional experience were equalized.

Our presupposition is that this residual difference in role enactment is a consequence of sex discrimination. Senior management sends different role expectations to men and women. Through the use of informal assistants, men are groomed for role advancement from technician to manager. Women, we posit, are not. This fosters gender differences in internalized role aspirations, which Lauzen (1992) showed is linked to role enactment. Thus, the existence of such a relation serves to decompose the actual mechanisms of sex discrimination, manifest in salary differences.

The model in Figure 1 also demonstrates that practitioner education contributes to enactment of the manager role. Lauzen (1992) provided evidence that role competencies are related to manager role enactment. The model suggests that in order for any practitioner in the public relations unit to enact the manager role predominantly, he or she must have the additional staff support in the technical areas to concentrate on manager role activities. The larger the staff in the public relations unit, the greater the opportunity to engage in manager role activities predominantly.

Enactment of specific manager role behaviors results in practitioner involvement in decision making of the organization's senior managers—the dominant coalition. We posit that manager role enactment and decision-making participation exert reciprocal influences. By facilitating communication between the dominant coalition and key publics, practitioners become involved in decision making as useful go-betweens or boundary spanners. Enactment of the problem-solving process facilitator role makes practitioners valued counsel to senior-level decision making. Participation in decision making, in turn, increases demand for such role behavior from the dominant coalition. Manager role enactment and decision-making participation, in turn, lead to higher salaries for such practitioners. Years of professional experience also contribute to higher salaries, but we posit that both manager role enactment and decision-making participation boost salaries above levels accounted for by time in service.

We posit that manager role enactment and decision-making participation increase practitioner job satisfaction. A common lament among practitioners is that they are excluded from decision making and thus unable to counsel the dominant coalition to avoid public relations mistakes. Instead, such practitioners are brought in after it "hits the fan" to repair the damage or cover it up—a markedly dissatisfying charge. Although higher salaries may

lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, decision-making participation provides common conceptual linkage to both.

METHODOLOGY

In 1979, Broom (1982) conducted a systematic sample of the membership directory of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Of the original sample of 815 practitioners, 458 (56% of the original sample) returned completed responses to the role item set. In 1991, we conducted a systematic sample of the membership directories of PRSA and the IABC. Of the original sample of 692 practitioners, 207 PRSA members and 135 IABC members responded—an overall response rate of 49%. To make direct comparisons to the 1979 survey, PRSA members in the 1991 sample were isolated. Among PRSA members, the 1991 response rate was 54%. All analyses reported in this article were conducted on comparable samples of PRSA members in 1979 and 1991.

Role Measures

The present study uses a battery of 24 items developed by Broom (Broom, 1982; Broom & Smith, 1979) to measure different role activities of practitioners. Broom conceptualized practitioners as consultants to senior management, providing services and/or influencing processes. As detailed elsewhere (Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier, 1992), practitioners act as expert prescribers when management treats them as experts with the experience and savvy to prescribe solutions to public relations problems or issues. As in the traditional doctor-patient relationship, the expert prescriber dictates and management complies to get back to business as usual. The problem-solving process facilitator helps management work through public relations problems to a satisfactory solution. Whereas expert prescription leads to passive management involvement in solving public relations problems, problem-solving process facilitation seeks active management involvement in a collaborative problem-solving process that leads to strong management "ownership" of solutions reached. The *communication facilitator* acts as a go-between, creating opportunities for senior management to hear from key publics and key publics to hear from management.

The *communication technician* provides technical communication services to the organization once decisions have been made by management. Alternatively conceptualized as "journalists in residence," such practitioners are hired for their writing and media expertise, becoming the wordsmiths and media relations specialists concerned primarily with crafting and placing messages in the media or publishing materials for internal publics.

Various practitioners and educators have suggested that the technician label is pejorative and devalues such work. Creedon (1991) suggested *creative specialist*, *communication producer*, or *information producer* as better descriptors of the role. Such relabeling, however, contributes little to the explanatory and predictive power of the model. We generally regard such tinkering with labels as misdirected and unproductive. Such concern for nomenclature, however, does reflect concern about presuppositions and values that underlie roles research. Ferguson (1987) challenged roles researchers "to be explicit about their assumptions particularly with regard to whether any one role is more desirable or to be more highly valued" (p. i). We address these normative concerns at the end of this article, after first seeking to clarify what we know about roles from a positivist perspective.

Broom operationalized six measures for each of the four conceptual roles previously mentioned. This 24-item set has been used in scores of practitioner role studies since first developed in the late 1970s (Dozier, 1992). Broom (1980, 1982) first noted the high intercorrelation of the three conceptual roles of expert prescription, problem-solving process facilitation, and communication facilitation. Dozier (1983) conducted exploratory factor analysis of three separate surveys to conclude that expert prescription, process facilitation, and communication facilitation constitute conceptually distinct components of a single organizational role, the *public relations manager*. Subsequent studies tended to support this empirical generalization (Anderson, Reagan, Sumner, & Hill, 1989; Dozier, 1984, 1992).

The first objective of the present study was to analyze the stability of the role measures over time. Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on the 1979 and 1991 data sets. A four-factor solution emerged when the 1979 role set was subjected to exploratory principal-components factor analysis and rotated to a varimax solution. The four factors account for 62% of the variance in the 24-item role set. A five-factor solution emerged when the 1991 role set was subjected to the same factor analysis, accounting for 66% of the variance in the set.

The manager role emerged as the first factor in both analyses. The same 11 items loaded heavily on the first factor, indicating stability over the 12-year interim. Five items emerged on the technician factor in both the 1979 and the 1991 sets. A senior adviser factor also emerged in both the factor analysis of the 1979 and 1991 role sets. Originally labeled the *communication liaison* factor (Dozier, 1984), the *senior adviser* role tends to overlap with the manager role with regard to several role activities.

Activities specific to the senior adviser role include conducting communication audits to identify communication problems, reporting public opinion survey results to keep management informed of opinions of various publics, and creating opportunities for management to hear the views of publics. Regarding problem-solving process facilitation, both managers and senior advisers act as catalysts in management decision making, work with

managers to develop their public relations problem-solving skills, help management follow a systematic public relations planning process, diagnose public relations problems, and outline alternative solutions to problems. Activities specific to the manager role include making communication policy decisions and being held accountable for program success or failure. As argued (Dozier, 1983, 1992), senior advisers are managers thwarted by organizational constraints from participation in management decision making. Senior advisers are informal managers without formal policy-making power.

As indicated in previous research (Dozier, 1983), the minor role of media relations specialist proved unstable. This role consists of maintaining media contacts, placing press releases, and keeping others in the organization informed of what the media report about the organization. In this analysis, the two media relations items clustered on a single factor for the 1991 role set but were split between the manager and technician factors for the 1979 role set.

Based on the stability of the two-role factor solution in prior studies, the 1979 and 1991 role sets were separately subjected to two-factor confirmatory factor analysis. The results are displayed in Table 1 for the manager role and Table 2 for the technician role. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are consistent with prior research.

The manager role consists of seven measures of problem-solving process facilitation, four measures of communication facilitation, and three measures of expert prescription (see Table 1). The technician role consists of six measures, all of which were conceptualized by Broom (1982) as measures of communication technician role enactment (see Table 2). Manager and technician role factor scores were generated for each respondent in the 1979 study and the 1991 study. Because the extraction strategy was orthogonal, the two role scores are wholly unrelated to each other. Enacting the manager role is not the opposite of enacting the technician role; the two role activities are wholly independent of each other, $r = .00$, $p = .99$. In the 1979 survey, Cronbach's reliability coefficient for the 15 items in the manager role scale (Table 1) equals .94. The reliability coefficient for the six items in the technician role scale (Table 2) is .79. In the 1991 survey, Cronbach's alpha is .94 for the manager scale and .74 for the technician scale.

Operationally, relations between role measures and other variables can be tested in several ways. Manager and technician role scores can be tested separately against other variables. However, the concept of predominant practitioner role has proved useful in past research (Broom & Dozier, 1986). A practitioner's predominant role is the set of role activities the practitioner enacts most frequently. If the practitioner's technician role score is higher than his or her manager role score, the practitioner is classified as a technician predominantly. Because factor scores are normalized, roughly one half of the sample in each survey is classified as technicians. This means that

TABLE 1
Factor Loadings for Manager Role Items in 1979 and 1991 Public Relations
Society of America Surveys

<i>Average</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>Item Description</i>
.84	.83	.84	I plan and recommend courses of action for solving public relations problems. [PF]
.83	.80	.85	I diagnose public relations problems and explain them to others in the organization. [PF]
.81	.82	.80	Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving public relations problems. [EP]
.81	.79	.83	I operate as a catalyst in management's decision making. [PF]
.79	.82	.76	In meetings with management, I point out the need to follow a systematic public relations planning process. [PF]
.79	.77	.80	I take responsibility for the success or failure of my organization's public relations program. [EP]
.75	.76	.74	I keep management informed of public reactions to organizational policies, procedures, and/or actions. [CF]
.75	.75	.74	I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of public relations programs. [EP]
.73	.74	.71	I encourage management participation when making the important public relations decisions. [PF]
.73	.73	.73	I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding public relations problems. [PF]
.72	.73	.71	When working with managers on public relations, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems. [PF]
.70	.70	.70	I make the communication policy decisions. [EP]
.64	.61	.67	I report public opinion survey results to keep management informed of the opinions of various publics. [CF]
.57	.61	.53	I create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics. [CF]
.57	.56	.57	I conduct communication audits to identify communication problems between the organization and various publics. [CF]

Note. Identification of conceptual role for each measure: EP = expert prescriber; PF = process facilitator; CF = communication facilitator.

these practitioners enact technician role activities relatively more frequently (in comparison to others in the sample) than manager role activities. The other half of the sample enacts manager role activities relatively more frequently than technician role activities; they are classified as managers.

This strategy partially corrects for normative responses wherein respondents perhaps overreport the frequency of manager activities and underreport technician activities. Further, this strategy allows role behavior to be treated as categorical for purposes of analysis of variance.

TABLE 2
Factor Loadings for Technician Role Items in 1979 and 1991 Public Relations
Society of America Surveys

<i>Average</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>Item Description</i>
.83	.82	.83	I handle the technical aspects of producing public relations materials. [TECH]
.74	.77	.70	I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications. [TECH]
.64	.72	.55	I maintain media contacts and place press releases. [TECH]
.63	.67	.58	I am the person who writes public relations materials presenting information on issues important to the organization. [TECH]
.63	.61	.65	I do photography and graphics for public relations materials. [TECH]
.55	.50	.59	I edit and/or rewrite for grammar and spelling the materials written by others in the organization. [TECH]

Note. Identification of conceptual role for each measure: TECH = communication technician.

Education

Education was measured by asking respondents the number of years of formal education (beyond high school) they had completed. This measurement strategy provides a rough proxy measure of practitioner acquisition of the knowledge necessary to enact the manager role. The IABC Excellence Study (IABC Research Foundation, 1991) provides strong evidence that such knowledge is the most powerful indicator of excellence—a construct that also includes manager role enactment. In future research, we suggest a more detailed measure of education, particularly of specialized training in public relations.

Public Relations Staff Size

This concept was measured with a single indicator. Respondents were asked, "How many public relations practitioners work in your department/agency?" The respondents were instructed to include themselves in the count. The exact number of practitioners (up to 1,000) in the organization was captured.

Professional Experience

Several operational strategies can be used to measure practitioner professional experience. In the present study, the concept was operationalized as the number of years the respondent has worked full-time in public relations. The actual number of years was captured.

Tenure

Respondents were asked, "How many years have you been in your present job?" The actual number of years was captured. This measure provides an additional measure of professional experience, specific to the current organization and current duties and responsibilities.

Participation in Management Decision Making

Respondents were asked how often they participate in meetings with management to decide on adopting new policies, discuss major problems, adopt new programs or procedures, implement new programs or procedures, and discuss and evaluate the results of new programs or procedures (five items). Each activity was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5). Cronbach's reliability coefficient for this index is .92 in both the 1979 and 1991 surveys.

Salary

Respondents were asked to indicate their annual income from their full-time public relations job. The numeric response was recorded to the nearest \$1,000. Because of the sensitive nature of this question, the measure was labeled *optional* in the questionnaire. In 1979, 7% of respondents declined to answer this question. Of male practitioners, 8% declined to answer, and 5% of female practitioners declined. In 1991, about 17% of both male and female respondents did not answer this question. As in 1979, refusal to answer the income question was unrelated to gender.

Job Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to evaluate five statements about their current job. Using a 7-point scale, respondents indicated how strongly they liked the work they were doing, whether the job gave them a chance to do the things they do best, their feelings of accomplishment from their work, perceived importance of their work, and an evaluation of satisfaction in comparison to other jobs. Cronbach's reliability coefficient for this index is .91 in the 1979 survey and .88 in the 1991 survey.

FINDINGS

Figure 2 displays the 1979 findings of the test of the 15 relations posited in the model in Figure 1. Path coefficients were computed according to the

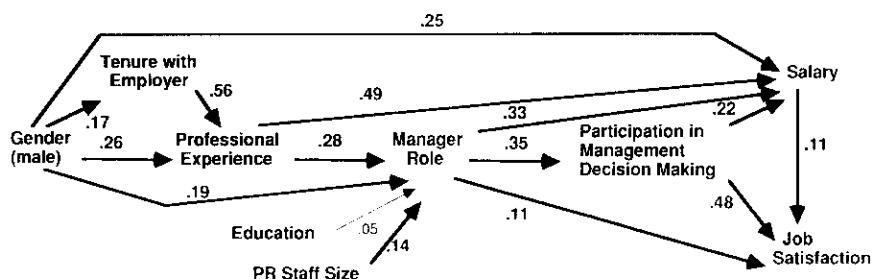


FIGURE 2 Test of role enactment model using 1979 PRSA membership survey ($N = 440$).

logic of the model in Figure 1. Relations between antecedent and dependent variables were computed after controlling for variance accounted for by any intervening variables. The solid lines represent statistically significant relations that can be generalized at a 95% level of confidence ($\alpha = .05$) to the population of PRSA members in 1979. The dotted lines represent relations in the sample that cannot be generalized at a 95% level of confidence ($\alpha = .05$) to the population of PRSA members in 1979.

The only relation posited in the theoretical model in Figure 1 and disconfirmed by statistical test is the linkage between education (years of education beyond high school) and enactment of the manager role predominantly. The remaining 14 relations are positive (as posited) and statistically significant.

Of special interest to the debate over gender and salary is the linkage between gender and predominant manager role enactment and the linkage between gender and salary. The linkage between gender and predominant manager role enactment is the residual variance not accounted for by the practitioner's years of professional experience in public relations and length of employment in his or her present job. This residual variance (if significant) is taken as an indicator of gender role segregation, although other theoretical explanations can be posited. That is, women are significantly less likely to enact the manager role predominantly, even when male and female practitioners are equalized in terms of their professional experience. In 1979, this relation was statistically significant; gender accounted for about 4% of variance in predominant manager role enactment, even after the influence of professional experience was controlled.

The linkage between gender and salary is the residual variance not accounted for by professional experience, predominant manager role enactment, and participation in management decision making. This is gender salary discrimination—the income penalty that women in public relations suffer, even after differences in professional experience, role playing, and decision-making participation have been controlled. In the 1979 study, this relation is statistically significant; gender accounted for about 6% of the

variance in income, even after professional experience, manager role playing, and decision-making participation were controlled.

Gender differences in income can be more readily appreciated by examining average annual income for male and female practitioners. In the 1979 sample, female practitioners earned an average of \$22,620 a year, compared to \$38,840 for men.¹ That is, women were making only 58 cents (on average) for every dollar their male counterparts made in 1979. Practitioners enacting the manager role predominantly made \$41,710 in 1979, whereas practitioners enacting the technician role predominantly earned only \$27,530.² In 1979, technicians earned only 66 cents (on average) for every dollar earned by managers (on average). In 1979, 57% of the male practitioners enacted the manager role predominantly, whereas only 28% of the female practitioners enacted the manager role predominantly.³ Further, female practitioners in 1979 posted an average of 9.9 years of professional experience in public relations, significantly less than male practitioners, who posted an average of 16.1 years.⁴

Given the differences in professional experience and role enactment, do these factors account for income differences between men and women? No, not in 1979. After controlling for the influences of differences in professional experience, manager role enactment, and participation in management decision making, women still made significantly less money than men. The average adjusted annual income for female practitioners in 1979 totaled \$29,900, compared to \$39,200 for male practitioners.⁵ In 1979, women on average made 76 cents for every dollar earned by men on average, even after the influences on salary of professional experience, manager role playing, and management decision-making participation were removed.

Figure 3 displays the test of the same theoretical model on the data collected in 1991, using the same measures on a sample of PRSA members, comparable to the 1979 sample. Of the 15 posited relations, four are not statistically significant. Of those, two insignificant relations are of special importance. If replicated in further studies, the change from 1979 to 1991 represents an important evolution of public relations practices away from systemic patterns of gender discrimination in roles and salaries documented in the 1979 study.

¹The relation is statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence, $F(1, 405) = 77.05$, $p < .001$.

²The relation is statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence, $F(1, 407) = 69.05$, $p < .001$.

³The relation is statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence, $\chi^2(1, N = 434) = 29.25$, $p < .001$.

⁴The relation is statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence, $F(1, 432) = 46.21$, $p < .001$.

⁵The relation is statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence, $F(1, 394) = 27.07$, $p < .001$.

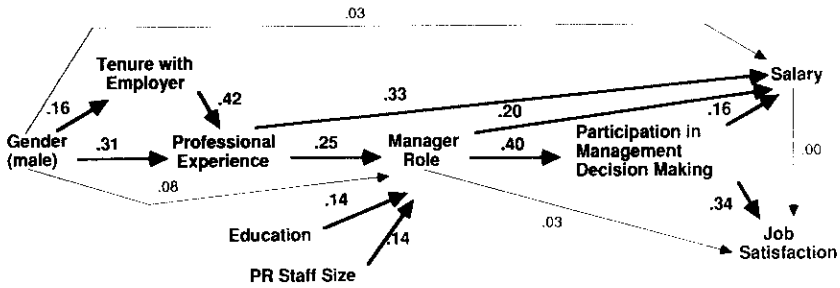


FIGURE 3 Test of role model enactment model using 1991 PRSA membership survey (N = 203).

The relation between gender and predominant manager role enactment is not statistically significant once the influences of professional experience and tenure are removed.⁶ As in 1979, practitioners enacting the manager role predominantly in 1991 earned more than practitioners enacting the technician role. Managers in 1991 earned average annual incomes of \$73,620, compared to technicians earning an average of \$51,050 a year.⁷ Among male practitioners in 1991, 55% enacted the manager role predominantly, virtually unchanged from the 57% of men enacting the manager role predominantly in 1979. Among female practitioners in 1991, 39% enacted the manager role predominantly, up 11 percentage points from 28% in 1979.⁸ Although men in the sample were more likely to enact the manager role predominantly than women in the sample, the gender gap in role enactment has shrunk since 1979. Gender accounts for less than 1% of the variance in predominant manager role enactment, once the influence of professional experience is controlled. The relation between gender and manager role enactment in the sample cannot be generalized with confidence to the population of PRSA members in 1991.

The smaller sample size in 1991 increases the possibility of a Type II error (null hypothesis is confirmed even though it is not true in the population) in making this inference. However, the drop in explained variance from more than 4% in 1979 to less than 1% in 1991 supports the inference of an actual reduction of the gender gap in role enactment in the population of PRSA members.

Female practitioners continued to earn lower salaries than male practitioners in 1991. On average, female practitioners earned \$53,010 in 1991,

⁶The relation is not statistically significant according to the 95% decision rule ($\alpha = .05$), $F(1, 193) = 1.19, p = .276$.

⁷The relation is statistically significant at the 99% level of confidence, $F(1, 163) = 9.28, p < .01$.

⁸The relation in 1991 is statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence, $\chi^2(1, N = 197) = 4.74, p < .05$.

whereas male practitioners earned \$71,450.⁹ That is, women on average made 74 cents for every dollar men made in 1991. Although the gap has narrowed since 1979 (up from 58 cents on average in 1979), the difference in income remains statistically significant.

The relation between gender and salary is not statistically significant, however, after controlling for the influences of professional experience, manager role enactment, and decision-making participation. Women make \$60,740 on average, once the influences on salaries of professional experience, manager role enactment, and decision-making participation are removed. Men on average make \$63,810 a year, after these influences are removed. That is, women average 95 cents for every dollar men make (once these influences are removed), up from 76 cents in 1979. The \$3,070 gap between salaries of men and women (once covariates are controlled) is not statistically significant.¹⁰

In 1991, differences in professional experience accounted for a larger portion of the gender income differences, when compared to 1979. However, based on these samples of PRSA members, aggregate differences in professional experience (years of public relations work) change slowly. In 1991, men posted 16.9 years of professional experience in public relations, virtually unchanged from the 16.1 year average posted in 1979. Women posted an average of 11.0 years in 1991, up slightly from 9.9 years average professional experience in 1979.¹¹

Two other relations posited in Figure 1 were not found in the 1991 survey. In 1991, participation in management decision making played a predominant role in accounting for variance in job satisfaction of practitioners. Other influences posited in the model exert no significant influence on job satisfaction once management decision-making participation is controlled. Specifically, enactment of the manager role predominantly and salary are not significantly related to practitioner job satisfaction once the influence of decision-making participation is removed. Other factors external to the model account for the lion's share of the variance in practitioner job satisfaction in 1991. The only variable important in explaining practitioner job satisfaction in both 1979 and 1991 is practitioner participation in management decision making.

⁹The relation is statistically significant at the 98% level of confidence, $F(1, 169) = 6.03$, $p < .015$.

¹⁰There is only a 31% chance that the difference in mean income between men and women in 1991 generalizes to the population of PRSA members, once the influence of professional experience, role enactment, and decision-making participation has been removed, $F(1, 158) = 0.16$, $p = .692$.

¹¹The differences in professional experience between men and women was statistically significant in 1979, $F(1, 432) = 46.2$, $p < .001$, and in 1991, $F(1, 204) = 27.1$, $p < .001$. Aggregate increases in years of professional experience from 1979 to 1991 are insignificant for both men, $F(1, 425) = 0.76$, $p = .38$, and women, $F(1, 211) = 1.39$, $p = .24$.

CONCLUSIONS

A comparative analysis of surveys conducted of PRSA members in 1979 and 1991 suggests that patterns of gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation may be breaking down in public relations work. In 1991, gender differences in manager role enactment and salary were more fully accounted for by differences in professional experience than these same differences were in 1979. We reach this conclusion with some trepidation, because such findings and conclusions could be used to perpetuate gender discrimination in public relations. Therefore, we want to debunk two possible distortions of our findings:

Distortion 1: The study supports the conclusion that gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation never existed.

Not true! The data provide strong evidence of gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation among PRSA members in 1979.

Distortion 2: The study supports the conclusion that gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation may have existed in the past but have now disappeared.

Premature! The data from a smaller sample of PRSA members in 1991 show a significant decrease in the variance not accounted for by professional experience in role enactment and salary, when compared to a larger sample of PRSA members in 1979. Although the trend is encouraging, the smaller sample size in 1991 provides less precise estimates of the population parameters. We are more confident that gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation existed in 1979 than that such discrimination and segregation no longer existed in 1991. The possibility of Type I error in 1979 is remote. The possibility of Type II error in 1991 is considerably larger. The magnitudes (effect size) of gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation apparently have shrunk in the population of PRSA members since 1979. However, the population to which such inferences can be made (PRSA members) constitutes only a small fraction of the overall public relations labor force.¹² Clearly, further research is needed on different sam-

¹²In post hoc analysis of the 1991 data base, responses of both PRSA and IABC members were combined and the model in Figure 1 tested on the combined data. Of specific relevance here is the correlation between income and gender, after controlling for professional experience, role enactment, and decision-making participation. The partial correlation coefficient is .08 between gender (male) and income, which is not statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence. However, there is about a 90% chance, $p = .096$, that the partial correlation in the combined sample generalizes to the population of PRSA and IABC members in 1991. We conclude that the effects of gender salary discrimination may linger for IABC members, partial $r = .19$, even after the influences of professional experience, role enactment, and decision-making participation have been removed.

ple frames to permit extrapolation of the findings of this study to the universe of public relations practitioners. We believe we have detected progress but not the state of gender parity.

With these limitations in mind, what factors can account for the reduction in overt gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation? We believe that the feminist movement in American society accounts for some of that change. We also believe that female practitioners who have struggled to break through the managerial "glass ceiling" are seeing some fruits of their labor. These efforts within the profession have been supported by feminist scholars who have sought to demystify and deconstruct mechanisms of gender discrimination. Scholars such as Cline, Creedon, Dayrit, Einsiedel, Ferguson, L. A. Grunig, Hon, Mathews, Pickos, Rakow, and Toth have contributed much to our understanding of roles and gender. This constitutes only a partial list of feminist scholars who have contributed to the body of knowledge in this area. Further work needs to be done. In the following section, we attempt to facilitate this stream of research by clarifying several issues related to role research.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN ROLES RESEARCH

In the positivist tradition, roles research seeks to explain and predict the antecedents and consequences of role enactment. At the same time, roles research is embedded in a set of normative judgments that make such positive theory useful and important. As Ferguson (1987) suggested, roles research benefits from a clear explication and clarification of the presuppositions that drive the research agenda.

A Technician By Any Name

Much ado has been made of the use of the label *technician* to describe the set of practitioner activities involved in the generation and dissemination of messages in behalf of organizations. Of particular concern is the implication that the technician label was assigned pejoratively to public relations work principally conducted by women. Indeed, labels that the powerful assign to the less powerful should be examined critically, for the structure of language does serve the vested interests of the status quo (Spender, 1990). Such an analysis of the technician label in roles research does not support such allegations. First, the technician label was selected because it clarifies the relation between the activities of practitioners and the larger organization. Although such activities may involve high levels of creativity and communicator competency, they remain unrelated to other important aspects of the public relations function (environmental scanning, program evaluation, issues management, strategic planning), as a matter of empirical fact. Second,

the label was first explicated for purposes of organizational theory, not to describe the activities of female practitioners. Although the initial development of role measures occurred in the 1970s (Broom & Smith, 1979), the initial linkage between gender and roles was not discovered until the 1980s (Broom, 1982). The concept of gender role segregation (Dozier et al., 1983) was developed inductively through secondary analysis of research on practitioner use of evaluation techniques (Dozier, 1981). The temporal sequence is inconsistent with assertions that the technician label was developed to denigrate women's work.

Regarding gender and roles, our presupposition is that healthy humans and competent managers are highly androgynous, possessing attributes stereotypically associated with both men and women (Bem, 1977). We view with skepticism any scholarship that traffics in gender stereotypes. If women are more emphatic, expressive, and warm as dictated by socialization and stereotype, then men would benefit from the acquisition of such competencies (Powell, 1988). If men are more logical, self-confident, and adventurous as dictated by socialization and stereotype, then women would benefit from the acquisition of such competencies.

With regard to the segregation of women in the technician role, we take exception to the assertion that roles research trivializes and denigrates such work (Creedon, 1991, p. 69). Analogously, studying the day-to-day tasks in caring for an infant does not trivialize and denigrate parenthood. Extending this same analogy, arguing that women should have the choice to work inside or outside the home does not denigrate or trivialize motherhood. Regarding gender and practitioner roles, the issue is career choice, not the inherent worth of the work itself. As previously noted, all practitioners enact elements of both the manager and technician roles, which themselves are simply useful abstractions for studying the wide range of activities that practitioners perform in their daily work. In the 1970s and 1980s, women enacted the technician role predominantly with much greater frequency than men. In the 1990s, this study indicates that the pattern may be changing as women (in the aggregate) achieve higher levels of professional experience.¹³ Do (did) women select the technician role for themselves? Or do (did) the conjoined influences of socialization, preparation, opportunities, stereotyping, and direct discrimination result in the involuntary segregation of women in a particular organizational role? The question of choice, however, is funda-

¹³In 1991, enactment of the manager role (role scores) among both PRSA and IABC members differed little between men and women. Among PRSA members in 1991, the partial correlation between manager role enactment (not predominant role) and male gender is .01, $p = .42$, once professional experience is controlled. Among IABC members in 1991, the partial correlation between manager role enactment (not predominant role) and male gender is .03, $p = .38$, once professional experience is controlled. Neither relation is significant. Technical role enactment is higher for women than for men in both the PRSA, partial $r = .06$, $p = .21$, and IABC, partial $r = .05$, $p = .31$, samples in 1991. Again, neither relation is significant.

mental. Anecdotal data indicating some female practitioners prefer performing activities that make up the technician role in no way satisfy the choice question. Clearly, more research is needed.

We further believe that the debate over the technician label has little to do with feminism. The debate has much more to do with the seeming conflict between the creative artistic preferences of many practitioners, both male and female, and the manager function of public relations. McGoon (1993) provided relevant anecdotal information from a fax poll conducted by *Communication World*. A majority of those polled said they preferred writing, editing, producing publications, and other message-generating activities. Managing activities in the public relations or communication were preferred by only 18 of the 170 respondents. Only 4 of the 170 indicated that "working with top management" was their most preferred work activity. When asked where they wanted to be professionally in 10 years, some of the more telling answers included: "writer collecting royalties on a runaway best seller children's book," "living in Italy writing books," "on a beach," "owning my own greenhouse," and "in France working as an English professor."

Unfortunately, little formal research has been conducted on the subjective wants and dreams of today's working practitioners. One exception is the Q-study by Dozier and Gottesman (1982) of practitioners in San Diego, California. The Q-study, which involved Q-sorts of self-referent statements about public relations, was embedded in a larger survey of San Diego IABC and PRSA members by mailed questionnaire. The researchers found that one belief system was highly correlated with technician role enactment. Labeled the *creative artistic* practitioner factor (Dozier & Gottesman, 1982), the men and women who loaded most heavily on this factor exhibited a series of interrelated values and beliefs about public relations work:

The creative artistic practitioner prefers the spontaneous, intuitive, and creative aspects of the public relations process. This preference is manifest in organizational role playing that stresses production of communication and immersion in the techniques of communication development. While creative artistic practitioners in this study described themselves as holding middle and top management positions in their organizations—as well as staff positions—they appear to avoid the activities associated with the managerial role. The creative artistic practitioner wants more say in organizational decisions, but is distrustful of changes implied by climbing the organizational ladder to decision-making levels. (p. 26)

Public relations practitioners who gravitate toward communication production activities—who define creativity largely in terms of the words and graphics they produce—find themselves at odds with the evolution of public relations into a true managerial-level profession. The label *technician*, which demystifies the organizational role of such service providers, no doubt ruffles many. However, we see no value in cloaking organizational roles in labels that perpetuate myths about message-generating activities in organi-

zations. A technician by any other name would still be a technician: a creator and disseminator of messages, intimately involved in production, operating independent of management decision making, strategic planning, issues management, environmental scanning, and program evaluation. Such work provides satisfaction to practitioners and has value to organizations, but only in the context of a managed public relations function.

The Empirical and Normative Value of Technician Role Enactment

Regarding the "value" of technician role enactment, it is a safe empirical generalization (but not a normative evaluation) to assert that organizations reward manager role enactment with higher salaries than they do technician role enactment (see Footnotes 2 and 7). Women and men enacting the manager role predominantly earn higher salaries than men and women enacting the technician role predominantly. Participation in strategic decision making (as opposed to making tactical decisions about creating and disseminating messages) is unrelated to technician role enactment. Environmental scanning and program evaluation are also unrelated to technician role enactment. These empirical findings should not be confused with normative assertions about practitioner roles.

Theory-driven normative assessments of the value of roles operate at the organizational level of analysis. The organizational worth of the manager role is embedded in a definition of the public relations function in which organizations negotiate and adapt to their environments, based on a two-way exchange of communication between dominant coalitions and publics (Dozier, 1989). For the public relations unit to perform this function, some practitioners must have the knowledge, status, and track record to enact the manager role much of the time. Organizations reward manager role enactment, but such reward is an effect of the role's value to the organization, not its cause. The normative value of manager role enactment, therefore, derives from the public relations unit's ability to solve problems for organizations.

The generation of mediated messages for one's organization has no inherent value in public relations. Writing and disseminating messages are important activities in public relations and in other organizational functions, but not ends in themselves. This distinction is extremely difficult for a "communication specialist" or a "journalist in residence" to grasp, in part because it's different from worldviews formed through media production work and in part because it threatens perceptions of self-worth. Environmental scanning, strategic planning, issues management, and program evaluation have no equivalencies in the kind of work journalists in residence and other message producers do prior to switching to public relations; such knowledge is not easily acquired through work in message production alone. Although

technicians make many tactical decisions in producing and distributing public relations communications, they do so more or less independent of the strategic decision making of the dominant coalition.

In the end, the organizational worth of mediated messages is not indicated by the gold quills and silver anvils practitioners give to each other. The value of communications (as distinct from communication) is determined by the quality of mutually beneficial relations that such communications help to establish with key publics. By inference, the value of technician role enactment is nested within the public relations management function.

When a practitioner enacts the technician role predominantly and continues to do so throughout his or her career, the value or worth of such activities cannot be determined without knowing the context. We can assume that, in most situations, technically competent communications are prerequisite to desired impact. However, well-crafted communications are by no means sufficient. To be sufficient, communications must be executed within the context of a strategic plan to achieve measurable goals and objectives related to establishing or maintaining desired relations. Only then can the value of communications be determined, based on their contributions to goal achievement (Dozier & Ehling, 1992).

What, Then, Is Public Relations?

Normative presuppositions regarding role enactment do not stop at the organizational level of analysis. The emergence of public relations as a true profession rests on benefits that professional practices provide society as a whole. The twin concepts of action strategies (Cutlip et al., 1985) and symmetry (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) provide significant benefits to society when incorporated into public relations practices. Cutlip et al. defined *action strategies* as "steps taken to change the organization's policies, procedures, products, services and behavior to better serve the mutual interests of the organization and its publics" (p. 258). As defined by J. Grunig and Hunt, symmetrical public relations treats the function as dialogue, both in terms of communication and in terms of effect. Dozier (1993) argued that symmetrical practices require seemingly paradoxical behavior of practitioners.

In communication with internal and external publics, the practitioner acts as agent of the organization's dominant coalition, as a cooperative antagonist in relations with publics. In communication with other members of the dominant coalition, however, the practitioner advocates the publics' interests, acting both symbolically and pragmatically as *their* agent (p. 235).

Action strategies are program-level manifestations of a symmetrical worldview, wherein practitioners seek "positive sum" or "win-win" solutions to problems involving organizations and their publics.

Symmetrical action strategies presume that practitioners participate in management decision making as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, and problem-solving process facilitators. Without formal or informal power to influence management decision making—to implement action strategies—the management function of public relations cannot be performed. Instead, this important management function is reduced to the essentially technical task of producing communications to implement decisions made by others in the organization. The resulting vacuum in the management function of public relations is likely to be taken over by other units in organizations (Lauzen, 1990, 1991). As a consequence, individual practitioners, the public relations unit, the organization, the emerging public relations profession, and society as a whole suffer.

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