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Trends in Public Relations Roles: 1990-1995

ABSTRACT: This study reported trend data on the roles of national Public Relations Society of America members. The authors posited that roles are constantly in process and illustrated this through analyses of activities within the broad manager and technician categories. The authors argued also that professional experience as a predictor of manager enactment should be defined not as number of years in the field but by looking at the kinds of experiences received on the job.

Study results suggested that for this sample of PRSA members an agency role emerged in 1995 in addition to the manager and technician roles found in 1990. There was still cross-over in the activities performed in each of the role profiles, indicating that public relations people do an assortment of activities. The agency role could be a result of the economic downturn that occurred in this five-year period. Women still seemed to be doing "it all" for less money. They did not carry out the same activities as the male role profiles that emerged and enacted a less pronounced agency role.

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Research on the roles of public relations practitioners has been important to the body of knowledge in public relations for several reasons. For example, obtaining valid descriptions of what public relations people do has helped to explain an occupation historically viewed as focused on very few activities, such as writing press releases or talking with the media. The earlier work by Broom and Smith,¹ Broom,² and Broom and Dozier³ provided evidence of a much more sophisticated organizational contribution. Specifically, public relations people reported performing in four types of roles: the expert prescriber, the communication facilitator, the problem-solving process facilitator, and the communication technician.

These four roles represented the following activities: The *expert prescriber* "operates as the authority on both public relations problems and their solutions. The client, or management, is often content to leave public relations in the hands of the 'expert' and to assume a relatively passive role."⁴ The *communication facilitator* "casts the practitioner as a sensitive 'go-between' or information broker. The practitioner serves as a liaison, interpreter and mediator between the organization and its publics."⁵ The *problem-solving process facilitator* "serves as a member of the management team, guiding others through a rational problem-solving process that may involve all parts of the organization in the public relations planning and programming process."⁶ The *communication technician* "provides the specialized skills needed to carry out public relations programs... Rather than being part of the management team, technicians are concerned with preparing and producing communications materials for the public relations effort."⁷

In 1994, Cultip, Center, and Broom added to this description of the problem-solving process facilitator: "The problem-solving facilitator collaborates with other managers to define and solve problems. Collaboration and consultation begin with the first question and continue until the final joint evaluation of program success or failure."⁸

Research on roles made it possible to link public relations work to a broader investigation of how excellent public relations was structured in organizations.⁹ Dozier concluded that the four roles described by public relations practitioners could be reduced to the manager and technician roles because the expert prescriber, the communication facilitator, and the problem-solving process facilitator roles all represented a broader managerial role.¹⁰ He argued that the two-role typology of manager and technician permitted a way to operationalize the concept of roles so that we could learn how specific roles linked to the perceptions of the organizational dominant coalition¹¹ and the use of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models of public relations.¹² The findings from the landmark Excellence study showed Dozier's hypotheses on public relations roles and dominant coalition expectations to be correct. The top management of the organizations studied demanded more of public relations people when they could deliver managerial public relations.¹³

Roles research examined how the roles public relations people played related to such variables as environmental uncertainty, participation in decision making, use of research, salary and gender.¹⁴ Of these types of relationships, the

relationship between roles and gender ignited the most response. Although Broom¹⁵ and Broom and Dozier¹⁶ reported public relations practitioners performed all of the roles activities listed to some extent, they found that women were more likely than men to perform the technician role. Because public relations roles helped to determine salary, that women were disproportionately working in technician roles meant that they were less likely to make higher salaries.

Until 1995, studies of gender and roles suggested that even when women and men held the same role, were of similar ages, worked in similar industries, and had similar years in public relations, (that is controlling for the other demographic explanations for salary differences), women were paid less than men.¹⁷

However, in 1995, Dozier and Broom repeated their 16+ year longitudinal research on roles and gender. They were able only to report on 207 PRSA members in their 1991 survey, down from an original 1982 sample of 815 practitioners.¹⁸ They found roles still predicted salaries, with the managerial role being valued more than the technical role. Based on their survey, they concluded "the relation between gender and salary is not statistically significant, after controlling for the influences of professional experience, manager role enactment, and decision-making participation."¹⁹ Instead, they argued the more significant factor to account for gender income differences was professional experience, albeit based on a smaller sample than would have been preferred. Dozier and Broom defined professional experience as "the number of years the respondent had worked full-time in public relations."²⁰

At roughly the same time Dozier and Broom published their findings on the evolution of the managerial role, others sought to describe what public relations women and men did using different activities from the ones always used by Dozier and Broom.²¹ For example, Toth and Grunig²² examined the ordering of a different set of role activities within the manager and technician typologies. They argued that breaking down the two most parsimonious role categories of manager and technician was important because we were missing such findings as women doing both technical and managerial functions under a management dimension for less money and men doing more managerial tasks in the technician ranks that prepared them for management positions.

Weaver-Lariscy, Cameron, and Sweep reported that women in higher education public relations perceived more than men that their role was that of "conscience of the organization," while their male peers perceived their role as the "dominant insider."²³

Hon²⁴ reported the results of in-depth interviews of women in public relations who spoke of a "male-dominated work environment" that reduced women's opportunities for professional experience because they encountered exclusion from men's networks, to few mentors, discomfort with male-defined rules of advancement, and outmoded attitudes of senior men.

In a similar but quantitative study, Weaver-Lariscy, Sallot and Cameron found that women and men in public relations perceive their professional worlds differently. Men "saw greater gender salary equity, equal opportunity for advancement, and do not fear lower salaries emerging as women enter the

field.”²⁵ Women experienced salary inequities, unequal advancement opportunities, and lower salaries. Therefore, they did not perceive a just and equitable standard across the profession.²⁶

These studies by Weaver-Lariscy et al.²⁷ Weaver-Lariscy et al.²⁸ and Toth and Grunig²⁹ suggest a modification to the Dozier and Broom³⁰ position that professional experience influences enacting the management role. If women perceived their roles and role opportunities differently than men or if women were still doing “it all” within the managerial profile while men were being groomed for management while performing technical tasks, then the concept of “professional experience” as number of years is overly simplified. Rather than number of years, what men and women were doing over time in public relations would make clearer how they could more likely enact manager roles.

The concept of “role” itself has an underlying assumption of permanence, reinforced by the Broom and Dozier lengthy program of research in this area. However, we supported Culbertson’s argument that we should be seeking to take apart the concept of role categories and instead look at role-making or roles in process.³¹ While our report of findings begins with a confirmation of the two-role typology, we sought also to look within the resulting constructs to see how men and women prioritized their technical and managerial activities.

We have made comparisons in this report between the managerial and technical roles reported by men and women over time. This portion of our report seemed the most likely to encourage a bi-focal mindset; that is, accepting an assumption that one is either a manager or a technician in his or her work. However, much of the principal research in the area of roles has sought to qualify such findings by stating that all public relations workers perform both technical and managerial tasks.³² We therefore caution against a manager/technician mindset that seduces us into thinking that all the work of technicians is similar and all of the work of managers is similar.

We also want to caution against a bi-focal mindset in looking at the experiences of men and women in their public relations roles. We argue from a feminist theory view that “women face a continual devaluation in relation to men.”³³ This becomes problematic if we anticipate that “if women were more like men” they would be more successful, etc. This statement reflects most on societal stereotypes and not on the work experiences of men and women. Instead, we urge readers to give equal voice to the experiences of women and men. We have attempted in this study to reveal in what ways women experience different role activities, as a way of resolving underlying causes for professional experience rather than gender in influencing managerial role enactment.

This report will use the terms of “gender” and “sex” interchangeably. While others have sought to distinguish between gender as a socially defined rather than biological attribute,³⁴ we followed Benderly’s proposal to use both terms to refer to both kinds of differences: “Gender comes down to what life revolves around anyway: earning a living.”³⁵

This study reports on the trends between 1990 and 1995 of the roles of public relations practitioners who belong to the national Public Relations Society

of America. We sought to determine whether the relationships within the manager and technician dimensions on various role activities had changed, and if so, in what ways. This research permitted considering the professional opportunities for experience that men and women gained in the roles that they reported. If professional experience, as Dozier and Broom³⁶ reported, accounts for gender income differences, then to help women achieve salary parity, we need to know whether women in the managerial and technical roles of public relations were gaining professional experience on the job needed to advance to the lucrative managerial positions. These research questions are summarized below.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have the reported roles of men and women in public relations changed between 1990 and 1995?
2. Are women and men receiving professional experience on the job that prepares them for more advanced managerial assignments?

METHODS

The results of this study are from two larger studies of the salaries, roles, and perceptions of the public relations field of members of the Public Relations Society of America. In May of 1995, a simple random sample of 1,500 members of the Public Relations Society of America received almost the same six-page mail questionnaire that was used in 1990. We added a question seeking the respondents' race. There were fewer questionnaires mailed in 1995 because of budget restrictions. However, the completion rate of 45 percent (678 questionnaires) continued to match expected rates for a lengthy survey of this kind. In 1990, there was a 37 percent completion rate (1,027 questionnaires) of a mailing of 2,785 questionnaires.

The actual survey instrument contained six-pages of questions to seek answers to the research questions. There was a list of 17 role activities to which respondents were asked to indicate what percentage of time they spent performing each, using a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 indicating that 100 percent of the time was devoted to that task. The role activities were adopted from secondary literature on public relations deemed valid by researchers at Boston University and used in a 1986 unpublished study of professional women in public relations.³⁷

DATA ANALYSIS

As with the 1990 factor analysis conducted, this factor analysis assessed the unidimensionality of this set of items.³⁸ Although all of the items loading on a factor may be significant, we set arbitrarily .20 as the point at

which items no longer accounted for enough of the variance to warrant discussion and .60 as the point above which the items accounted most for the variance.³⁹ While other studies, such as Dozier and Broom⁴⁰ reported only the very highest factor loadings, this reflects a researcher choice that may reduce the richness of the information provided. We chose to report more of the significant factor loadings in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the emerging role profiles.

RESULTS

Demographic Trends

The demographic characteristics of these two samples indicated a shift in the gender ratio of males to females in public relations but not in age of respondents (see Table 1 for the demographic characteristics of both samples). In the 1990 sample of PRSA members, 58 percent of the respondents were male and 42 percent were female. In this 1995 sample of PRSA members, 36.5 percent were male and 63.5 percent were female.

These percentages of PRSA members reflected other studies of the gender switch in public relations. In 1989, the U.S. Census reported a 59/41 ratio of male to female public relations workers⁴¹ and a 63/37 ratio of male to female public relations specialists in 1994.⁴² The median age of both men and women in this 1995 sample remained the same as in 1990—45 years to 35 years of age.

The average number of years of professional experience in public relations increased from eight in 1990 to 11 in 1995 for women and stayed the same—17 years—for men. These averages were comparable to 1991 data reported by Dozier and Broom, who found women posting an average of 11 years in public relations and men posting 16 years of professional experience.⁴³

TABLE 1

Gender, Age, Years of Experience, Salary, Ethnicity of 1990 and 1995 Samples

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>
Gender (Percentages)	58	36.5	42	63.5
Average Age in Years	45	45	35	35
Median Salaries	\$55,000	55,000	37,000	40,000
Average Years of Experience	17	17	8	11
Ethnicity				
European Americans		83		88
Other Reported (African American, Mexican American, Asian, Native American)		3		6

The ethnicity of PRSA members, added to the 1995 questionnaire, indicated that both men (82%) and women (88%) were predominately European American. Other ethnic groups reported included African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and Native American. Of the total sample, six percent were "other ethnic female" and three percent were "other ethnic male."

In 1995, the median salary for women had increased by \$3,000 to \$40,000. The men's median salary of \$55,000 stayed the same as had been reported in 1990; however, it was still \$15,000 higher than the median salary of the women. The women's average years of experience had increased to 11 from eight years and the men's average years of experience stayed the same.

Roles: How Have the Roles of PRSA Members Changed?

While the 1990 data indicated a two-role typology similar to the Broom and Dozier⁴⁴ manager and technician categories, there were three significant role profiles in 1995. In 1990, a varimax rotated factor matrix, reported by Toth and Grunig⁴⁵ provided a basis for reducing the survey list of 17 activities to two dimensions. These two dimensions were roughly equivalent to the Broom and Dozier⁴⁶ roles of manager and technician.

In 1995, a varimax rotated matrix of the same 17 activities provided a three-factor construct. In addition to the managerial and technical dimensions, similarly found in other studies, such as Broom and Dozier⁴⁷ and Dozier and Broom,⁴⁸ there appeared a third factor that seem to be tied to the expert prescriber profile, originally conceptualized by Broom and Smith.⁴⁹

The Managerial Role

First, there was a dramatic change in the numbers of significant role activities for both men and women under the managerial dimension. In 1990, both men and women's managerial profiles showed high loadings of several similar activities. These activities included counseling management, making communication policy decisions, evaluating program results, supervising the work of others, planning and managing budgets, planning public relations programs, and meeting clients/executives. There were seven activities that loaded higher than .60 for the men and eight activities that loaded higher than .60 for the women (see Tables 2 and 3).

The 1990 managerial profile to emerge generally was comparable to the Broom and Dozier three-category managerial construct: a combination of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator.⁵⁰ Other writings about public relations management had been in line also with the activities that loaded the highest for the 1990 data. J.E. Grunig described public relations managers as "facilitating communication between management and publics and guiding management through a 'rational problem-solving process.'"⁵¹

TABLE 2

Trends in Women's Roles: 1990, 1995*Factor 1: Managerial Activities for Women*

1990 Women	
Planning and managing budgets	.76
Making communication policy decisions	.76
Supervising the work of others	.75
Counseling management	.72
Managing public relations programs	.71
Planning public relations programs	.69
Meeting with clients/executives	.67
Evaluating program results	.65
Implementing new programs	.50
Meeting peers	.45
Conducting or analyzing research	.43
Implementing event planning/logistics	.31
Making media contacts	.24
Handling correspondence/tel. calls	.21
Implementing the decisions of others	.21
Disseminating messages	.14
Writing, editing, producing messages	-.01
1995 Women	
Planning public relations programs	.81
Managing public relations programs	.80
Implementing new programs	.53
Making communication policy decisions	.46
Planning and managing budgets	.43
Making media contacts	.39
Meeting clients/executives	.38
Evaluating program results	.37
Implementing event planning/logistics	.37
Counseling management	.36
Supervising the work of others	.35
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.28
Disseminating messages	.24
Conducting and analyzing research	.21
Writing, editing, producing messages	.20
Meeting with peers	.19
Implementing the decisions of others	.17

(continued)

TABLE 2**(Continued)***Factor 2: Technical Activities for Women*

1990 Women	
Implementing decisions made by others	.81
Writing, editing, producing messages	.80
Disseminating messages	.78
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.69
Implementing event planning/logistics	.64
Making media contacts	.64
Implementing new programs	.63
Meeting with peers	.61
Planning public relations programs	.45
Evaluating program results	.40
Managing public relations programs	.36
Conducting or analyzing research	.32
Meeting with clients/executives	.26
Making communication policy decisions	.18
Planning and managing budgets	.16
Supervising the work of others	.02
Counseling management	-.10
1995 Women	
Disseminating messages	.81
Writing, editing, producing messages	.80
Implementing decisions made by others	.54
Making media contacts	.49
Implementing new programs	.45
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.41
Implementing event planning/logistics	.35
Managing public relations programs	.30
Meeting with peers	.28
Planning public relations programs	.24
Making communication policy decisions	.24
Evaluating programs results	.21
Conducting or analyzing results	.14
Meeting with clients/executives	.12
Planning and managing budgets	.11
Counseling management	.03
Supervising the work of others	.01

TABLE 3

Trends in Men's Roles, 1990, 1995

Factor 1: Managerial Activities for Men

1990 Men	
Counseling management	.80
Making communication policy decisions	.77
Evaluating program results	.74
Supervising the work of others	.73
Planning and managing budgets	.73
Planning public relations programs	.70
Meeting with clients/executives	.64
Managing public relations programs	.58
Implementing new programs	.53
Conducting or analyzing research	.53
Meeting peers	.51
Handling correspondence/telephone calls	.35
Implementing event planning/logistics	.32
Disseminating messages	.15
Implementing the decisions of others	.15
Making media contacts	.14
Writing, editing, producing messages	.08
1995 Men	
Planning public relations programs	.78
Managing public relations programs	.74
Making communication policy decisions	.60
Counseling management	.53
Implementing new programs	.53
Planning and managing budgets	.48
Implementing event planning/logistics	.47
Evaluating program results	.39
Supervising the work of others	.38
Meeting clients/executives	.35
Making media contacts	.33
Conducting/analyzing research	.27
Disseminating messages	.21
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.22
Writing, editing, producing messages	.16
Meeting with peers	.15
Implementing the decisions of others	.06

(continued)

TABLE 3**(Continued)***Factor 2: Technical Activities for Men*

1990 Men	
Writing, editing, producing messages	.82
Disseminating messages	.82
Implementing decisions made by others	.76
Making media contacts	.75
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.64
Implementing event planning/logistics	.63
Implementing new programs	.60
Managing public relations programs	.56
Meeting with peers	.48
Planning public relations programs	.44
Meeting with clients/executives	.38
Planning and managing budgets	.29
Evaluating program results	.24
Making communication policy decisions	.22
Supervising the work of others	.10
Counseling management	.09
Conducting and analyzing research	.06
1995 Men	
Disseminating messages	.84
Writing, editing, producing messages	.82
Making media contacts	.53
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.50
Implementing event planning/logistics	.43
Implementing the decisions made by others	.41
Implementing new programs	.36
Managing public relations programs	.34
Planning and managing budgets	.32
Planning public relations programs	.24
Meeting with peers	.20
Making communication policy decisions	.19
Evaluating program results	.14
Meeting with clients/executives	.11
Conducting or analyzing research	.11
Supervising the work of others	.02
Counseling management	-.11

This profile was also in line with the findings by Dozier, et al., that excellent public relations at the individual level meant that communication managers carried out the following tasks: manage the organization's response to issues; use research to segment publics; develop goals and objectives for the department; conduct evaluation research; and prepare department budget.⁵²

However, the 1995 data shows a dramatic decline in the number of highly loaded managerial activities. There were three role activities that were highly loaded for the men's managerial profile and two role activities that were highly loaded for the women's managerial profile. For both the men and women managerial profiles, the two similar role activities that loaded above .60 were planning public relations programs and managing public relations programs. The managerial profile for the men also had making communication policy decisions load above .60 (see Tables 2 and 3).

Second, for both the 1990 and 1995 factor analyses, the women reported doing significantly 15 of the 17 role activities under the managerial profile. However the two activities reported below the .20 cutoff changed. In 1990, the women did not carry out "disseminating messages" and writing, editing, producing messages to any extent. In 1995, the women reported a significant level of activity in these areas. The two items that dropped out were "meeting with peers" and "implementing the decisions of others."

Between 1990 and 1995, the men reported doing only one less significant activity within the managerial profile. That is, 14 of the 17 role activities in 1990 were found to be significantly a part of the managerial profile. In 1995, 13 of the 17 role activities were found to be significantly a part of the managerial profile. The additional activity to drop out was "disseminating messages."

In 1995 there was a much more reduced set of activities, below .60, for both the men and women, indicating a loss of the richness of managerial enactment. The second set of activities below the most significant level of .60 for the men's managerial profile was counseling management (.53), which had been reported as the highest activity conducted by the men in the 1990 sample, implementing new programs (.53), planning and management budgets (.48), and implementing event planning/logistics (.47). For the men, there was a much lower clustering of three activities in the .30 range that included evaluating program results (.39), supervising the work of others (.38), and meeting clients/executives (.35), activities associated with more senior types of management work.

The second set of activities below the most significant level of .60 for the women's managerial profile were implementing new programs (.53), making communication policy decisions (.46), and planning and managing budgets (.43). There was a third lower cluster of activities in the .30 range, including making media contacts (.39), meeting clients/executives (.38), evaluating program results (.37), implementing event planning/logistics (.37), and counseling management (.36). This activity dropped from .72 in the 1990 data. Supervising the work of others (.35) dropped from .75 in the 1990 data. While both men and

women reported less rich managerial enactment, the women's profile was more reduced than the men's.

The Technician Role

In both the 1990 and 1995 factor analyses, the second factor for women and men found was comparable with the technician role previously described by Dozier and Broom.⁵³ In 1990, there were several higher loadings for both women and men in this profile, including implementing decisions made by others; writing, editing, and producing messages; disseminating messages; handling correspondence and making telephone calls; implementing event planning/logistics; making media contacts; and implementing new programs. According to Reagan, et al.,⁵⁴ Broom and Dozier called public relations practitioners "technicians" "if their work focused on such activities as writing public relations materials, editing and/or rewriting for grammar and spelling; handling the technical aspects, producing brochures or pamphlets, doing photography and graphics, and maintaining media contacts and placing press releases."

In the 1995 sample, for both the men and women, there were only two technical activities with loadings higher than .60, those of disseminating messages and writing, editing, and producing messages (see Tables 2 and 3). All of the other activities loaded below .54.

Both the women and men over the five years reported a lessening of activities under the technical profile. However, the women's profile went from a listing of 13 activities above .20 to 12 activities above .20. While the men's profile dropped from 14 activities above .20 to 11 activities above the .20 cutoff.

The women's technical profile between 1990 and 1995 still logically eliminated activities such as counseling management, supervising the work of others and planning and managing budgets. Making communication policy decisions became more a part of the technical role for women in 1995 and conducting and analyzing results and meeting with clients/executives became less important in the women's technical profile.

The men's profile between 1990 and 1995 indicated that the men's technical roles were more sharply drawn in the loss of making communication policy decisions, evaluating program results, meeting with clients/executives.

A Combination of Roles

Between the 1990 and 1995 studies, there continued to be overlapping role activities. The same items were significantly related to both the managerial and technical dimensions in 1990. For example, factor loadings for implementing new programs were over .50 for both men and women on the management dimension and .60 and .63, respectively, for men and women on the technical dimension. This finding supported the Broom qualification that public relations practitioners do combine a number of roles in practicing public relations.⁵⁵

In 1995, the same items were significantly related in the three dimensions emerging from the factor analysis. However, there were fewer activities seen in

combination with the managerial and technical roles. For both the men and the women management dimensions, the “implementing new programs” activity had overlap. The 1995 women’s managerial profile and the 1995 women’s technician profile both showed “implementing new programs” as .53 and .45 respectively. The 1995 men’s managerial profile and the 1995 men’s technical profile showed “implementing event planning/logistics” as .47 and .43 respectively.

A Third Factor Emerged: The Agency Profile

In 1995, a third role profile emerged from the factor analysis that seemed more like Broom’s expert prescriber role (see Table 4). We called this factor the “agency profile,” because the focus of the set of activities seemed to cover counseling; research; programming decisions; communicating with clients, peers and subordinates; handling correspondence and phone calls; and, making media contacts. This profile did not feature any of the technical activities seen in the technician factor such as writing, editing, producing messages, disseminating messages, and implementing event planning/logistics.

The men’s profile reported 12 of 17 activities to be significant to its make-up. More highly reported were meeting with peers, meeting with clients/executives, and evaluating program results. For the men in 1995, a second grouping of activities included conducting or analyzing research, counseling management, handling correspondence and making telephone calls. Other activities closely grouped to these were making communication policy decisions, supervising the work of others, implementing new programs and managing budgets.

This agency role was much less pronounced for the women. There were 8 of the 17 role activities indicated as significant in the profile. The two highest activities were below .60; those of meeting with peers and meeting with clients/executives.

In summary, the demographic characteristics of these two samples indicate a greater shift in the gender ratio of males to females in public relations but not in age of respondents and not in salaries. These results found not a two-role typology but three role types: manager, technician, and expert prescriber. There was a dramatic change in the number of highly significant management enactment activities for the women and for the men over time. Whereas in 1990, the managerial role profile showed several highly ranked role activities for both women and men, in 1995 there were only two activities, planning public relations programs and managing public relations programs that were above .60. The men had one other highly indicated activity than did the women—making communication policy decisions. Between 1990 and 1995, the women reported doing the same number of role activities under the managerial profile. Between 1990 and 1995, the men increased from 13 to 14 significant activities under the managerial profile. While both men and women reported less problem-solving facilitator managerial enactment, the women’s profile was more reduced than the men’s.

Similar to the dramatic change in managerial profiles for both the men and the women, the technician profiles illustrated a sharper picture of high focus on

TABLE 4**Factor 3: Agency Profile for Women and Men, 1995**

Women	
Meeting with peers	.57
Meeting with clients/executives	.55
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.40
Counseling management	.28
Evaluating program results	.26
Implementing decisions made by others	.22
Making media contacts	.21
Making communication policy decisions	.20
Men	
Meeting with peers	.72
Meeting with clients/executives	.69
Evaluating program results	.63
Conducting or analyzing research	.57
Counseling management	.47
Handling correspondence and making telephone calls	.38
Making communication policy decisions	.37
Supervising the work of others	.37
Implementing new programs	.35
Planning and managing budgets	.32
Planning public relations programs	.28
Making media contacts	.23

disseminating message and writing, editing, and producing messages. Other activities grouped below the .60 range. For both the men and the women in 1995, a second group of activities between .54 and .41 included almost the same ones: making media contacts, implementing the decisions made by others, and handling correspondence and making telephone calls. Similar to the 1990 data, the 1995 factors still indicated that many of the same activities were part of each of the three profiles. Although less pronounced in 1995, everyone still did everything on the list of items to some degree. The agency profile seemed the most distinct from the technician and managerial profiles.

CONCLUSIONS

The most striking contrast in roles between 1990 and 1995 was the drop off of high factor loadings for both the women and the men. The two highly loaded activities to remain over time were more of the day-to-day jobs of planning and managing public relations programs. The more senior roles of making communication policy decisions still highly loaded for the men; however, counseling management, implementing new programs, planning and man-

aging budgets and evaluating program results were reduced in the factor loadings from 1990, although less so for the men as for the women.

There could be several reasons for this change in managerial role enactment. It may reflect the economic downsizing of the early 1990s when many senior public relations managers lost their jobs. Those that remained, both men and women, were doing less of the problem-solving process kinds of management tasks and not the tasks that related to communication excellence. These corporate survivors could have been too stretched keeping up with the day-to-day operations to be spared to do advising, research, and evaluation.

While the "excellence" public relations manager activities did not load as highly on the manager profile, they did reappear in a third profile, likened to Broom's expert prescriber role. This shift from the problem-solving process role suggests that public relations practitioners' roles have become more sharply distinguished within organizations. Perhaps organizations reduced in this time period their demands for counseling and research because they did not have the resources to do so. Also perhaps the senior public relations people left when their managerial roles were reduced to work independently as "experts" or counselors.

The women's managerial role profiles between 1990 and 1995 indicated that they were still doing "it all," although they lost meeting with peers and implementing the decisions of others as opposed to the technical tasks of disseminating messages and writing, editing, producing messages. These women looked to be more alone, perhaps again a feature of a down-sized department. The 1995 women's profile suggests that women have lost ground in gaining communication manager experience. They performed fewer activities than reported in 1990 that could help increase their professional portfolios.

Between 1990 and 1995, the men's and women's technical role profiles grew in similarity. However, there was a more distinct drawing of the men's profile, increasing from three to six activities that were not significantly a part of the technician's role. The women's technical profile decreased by one the number of significant activities. However, these activities remained roughly similar in rankings to those reported in 1990. One conclusion to be drawn from these trends is that men in the technical roles were enacting a more specific technical function. But, this was not the case for women who still did more activities within the technician profile.

If these results in role changes to the men and women of the Public Relations Society of America were a function of the economic downturn that would have occurred between 1990 and 1995, the possibilities for excellent public relations to be practiced were also reduced. The expert prescriber role could have been still a part of the management of organizations; but, it would not have helped influence the whole organization through participation in guiding management through a demand-delivery linkage posited as vital to practicing excellent public relations.

These results were limited to the members of the Public Relations Society of America who perhaps over time have had a shift in membership to less senior people who had enacted the robust managerial role indicated in the 1990 data.

Even though the survey sought to obtain type of organization in which the members work, it could not obtain from job titles received whether this shift in membership could have affected the factor analysis. If there were fewer PRSA members in the sample that held higher managerial positions, or more PRSA members who were counselors, this could have accounted also for the change in the factor analyses.

This study should be of theoretical significance to the search for factors that affect salaries and managerial role enactment. Professional experience should be conceptualized not only in years of experience but also by what actual tasks make up the work of managers and technicians. If women did not have opportunities to counsel, make communication policy, and do research and evaluation in their management jobs, it was unlikely that they would advance in salary or role.

Of practical significance, this study of role factors continued to trace what people in public relations are doing over time. Roles in public relations are in process, enacted in economic circumstances that require practitioners to retool, and reinvent themselves to respond and even keep ahead of the demands of and changes within their organizations. When organizations suffer economically, they may choose to keep less senior workers and outsource their research and counseling needs. Public relations people in organizations need to assess which of their roles will be vital in economic hard times and be prepared to argue their internal value.

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