The contribution of South African corporate communication practitioners to organisational performance

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to two very special people and one very special dog:

Gawie

I have learned so much from you. You enrich my life by just being there. I love you.

Dad

When you pour your heart into your children, you enable them to fly even when you are not physically there any longer.

Ceaser

You taught me to live life abundantly with a passion for fun. I will miss you.

MY PHILOSOPHY

You either go big, or go home.

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ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

Although public relations is seen as a function that contributes to the greater good of society and the performance of an organisation (ref. Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:xii), the function does not, for various reasons, always deliver on this promise (ref. Gray, 2004:26-27; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:166, 169, 192; Steyn, 2000c:40; Tobin, 2004:56; Van Ruler, 1997:248, 263; 2004a:123). Practitioners and professional bodies from various countries have researched, and tried to overcome the variables negatively influencing practitioners, through various methods. However, no study has provided a comprehensive prioritised list of all the variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. In addition none of these actions has led to a sustainable solution for the profession where a critical mass of practitioners can keep the promise of contributing to the greater good of society and the performance of the organisation.

In light of this problem, this study tries to understand how public relations practitioners can enhance their contribution to organisational performance, by examining the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

The study is framed within the relational, reflective, two-way symmetrical and feminist paradigms, supported by the general excellence theory as meta-theory, and the relationship management and corporate communication role theories. The multidimensional paradigm was specifically selected to accommodate the complex research context (Grunig, 1989:18; 2006a; Valin, 2004).

From theory it was established that public relations contributes to organisational performance by assisting organisations to adapt to their changing environment by providing strategic information from the environment to the organisation that could reduce uncertainty in the organisation's strategic decision-making (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi; Raupp & Van Ruler, 2006:18; Steyn, 2000c:27; Valin, 2004). Through this process the organisation's triple bottom line goals are aligned with the realities of the environment in which it operates (Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; van Tonder & van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:149). This then creates long-term relationships with stakeholders that creates many benefits for the organisation (Grunig, 2006b:3, 6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 10, 11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:32; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9, 11; Phillips, 2006a:34, 35; 2006b:212). Within South Africa specifically, corporate communication practitioners perform the roles of strategist, manager and technician in order to complete the above tasks (Steyn, 2000b:1-42; 2000c:20-43).

The research methodology followed to gather data to answer the General research question, is both exploratory and interpretive. The research started with a literature study, followed by semi-structured interviews with four purposefully selected practitioners and the chairpersons of the two professional bodies (PRISA and IABC) in order to verify the variables identified in literature, and possibly identify new variables pertaining to the South African environment. These variables, together with those identified in literature, were then used to construct a questionnaire completed by public relations practitioners active in the 1 319 top performing South African organisations as per *South Africa's Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). A response rate of 19.9% was achieved.

The qualitative data was content analysed and the quantitative data analysed by means of Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) data analysis software. In order to determine the relationships between the variables influencing practitioners, structural equation modelling, by means of AMOS (SPSS Inc., 2009) software, was used.

In essence it was found that practitioners should take ownership and manage the variables influencing their performance. Furthermore, 13 variables pertaining to the individual-, industry- and professional-levels were statistically verified as the most important variables influencing practitioners. Due to the specific relationship between these variables, it would seem that enhancing any of these 13 variables would enhance the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

The main contribution of the study is to add to the discussion on the how the profession can manage its contribution to organisational performance by categorising and empirically verifying a list of all variables influencing practitioners' performance and by suggesting a model indicating the relationship between the most important variables influencing practitioners.

Keywords: Corporate communication, public relations, roles, practitioner roles, practitioner's skills, practitioner knowledge, corporate communication excellence, Excellence Study, feminism, corporate communication roles theory, technician, manager, strategist, corporate communication influences

OPSOMMING EN SLEUTELWOORDE

Al word korporatiewe kommunikasie gesien as ’n funksie wat bydra tot die algemene voordeel van die samelewing en organisasieprestasie (sien Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:xii), voldoen die funksie, vir verskeie redes, nie altyd aan die belofte nie (sien Gray, 2004:26-27; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:166, 169, 192; Steyn, 2000c:40; Tobin, 2004:56; Van Ruler, 1997:248, 263; 2004a:123). Verskeie praktisyns en professionele liggame van verskeie lande, het al navorsing gedoen oor, en deur verskeie metodes die negatiewe invloede op die praktisyn, probeer oorkom. Geen van hierdie pogings het egter tot ‘n volledige geprioritiseerde lys van al die veranderlikes wat ‘n invloed het op praktisyns se bydrae tot organisasieprestasie, gelei nie. Daarmee saam is geen langtermynoplossing vir die professie, waar die grootste meerderheid van praktisyns bydrae tot die algemene voordeel van die samelewing en organisasieprestasie, gevind nie. Teen hierdie agtergrond poog die studie om te verstaan hoe praktisyns hulle bydrae tot organisasieprestasie kan verbeter, deur na die aspekte wat praktisyns beïnvloed in hul bydrae tot organisasieprestasie, te ondersoek.

Hierdie studie is gedoen teen die agtergrond van die verhoudings-, reflektiewe-, twee-rigting simmetriese- en feministiese paradigma, wat ondersteun word deur die algemene uitnemendheidsteorie as metateorie, asook die verhoudingsbestuursteorie en korporatiewe kommunikasierolleteorie. Die multidimensionele paradigma is spesifiek so gekies om die komplekse navorsingskonteks te akkommodeer (Grunig, 1989:18; 2006a; Valin, 2004).

Vanuit die teorie is daar vasgestel dat korporatiewe kommunikasie bydra tot organisasieprestasie deur organisasies te help om aan te pas by hulle veranderende omgewing, deur strategiese inligting van die omgewing aan die organisasie te gee wat moontlike onsekerhede in strategiese besluitneming kan verminder (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi; Raupp & Van Ruler, 2006:18; Steyn, 2000c:27; Valin, 2004). Deur hierdie proses word die organisasie se drie-ledige prestasiedoelwitte met die realiteite van die omgewing waarin die organisasie funksioneer, belyn (Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; van Tonder & van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:149). Deur hierdie proses word dan langtermyn verhoudings met belangegroepe, wat tot voordeel van die organisasie strek, gevorm (Grunig, 2006b:3, 6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 10, 11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:32; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9, 11; Phillips, 2006a:34, 35; 2006b:212). Spesifiek binne Suid-Afrika, speel die korporatiewe kommunikasiepraktisyns die rolle van strateeg, bestuurder en tegnikus in die uitvoer van hierdie take (Steyn, 2000b:1-42; 2000c:20-43).

‘n Verkennende en interpretiewe navorsingsmetodologie is gebruik om die Algemene navorsingsvraag te antwoord. Die navorsing is afgeskop met ’n literatuurstudie, gevolg deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met vier spesifiek gekose praktisyns, asook die voorsitters van die twee professionele liggame (PRISA en IABC). Tydens die onderhoude is die veranderlikes wat in die literatuur genoem is getoets en moontlike nuwe veranderlikes spesifiek aanwesig in die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewing, geïdentifiseer. Hierdie veranderlikes, en díe wat in die literatuur geïdentifiseer is, is saamgevoeg in ’n vraelys. Die vraelys is voltooi deur die korporatiewe kommunikasiepraktisyns werksaam in die 1 319 hoogs presterende organisasies in Suid-Afrika, soos gelys in die *South Africa’s Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) en die *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). ’n Responskoers van 19.9% is bereik.

Die kwalitatiewe data is ontleed deur middel van inhoudsanalise en die kwantitatiewe data deur middel van Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) en SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) data analise sagteware. Om die verhouding tussen die veranderlikes wat praktisyns beïnvloed te bepaal is van *structural equation modelling*, deur middel van AMOS sagteware (SPSS Inc., 2007), gebruik gemaak.

Opsommend is bevind dat praktisyns eienaarskap moet neem en die veranderlikes moet bestuur wat hulle beïnvloed. Verder is 13 veranderlikes van toepassing op die individuele-, industrie- en professionele-vlakke statisties geverifieer as die mees invloedryke op die praktisyn. Die verhoudings tussen die 13 veranderlikes dui daarop dat enige verbetering in enige van die veranderlikes ’n verbetering in die praktisyn se bydrae tot organisasieprestasie teweeg sal bring.

Die studie dra by tot die bespreking van hoe die professie hul bydrae tot organisasieprestasie kan verbeter, deur die kategorisering en empiriese verifiëring van ’n lys van veranderlikes wat praktisyns beïnvloed, en deur ’n model voor te stel wat die verhoudings tussen die mees belangrike veranderlikes wat die praktisyn beïnvloed, aan te dui.

Sleutelwoorde: Korporatiewe kommunikasie, skakelwerk, rol, praktisynsrolle, praktisynsvaardighede, praktisynskennis, korporatiewe kommunikasie-uitnemendheid, uitnemendheidsteorie, feminisme, korporatiewe kommunikasie-rolle teorie, tegnikus, bestuurder, strateeg, korporatiewe kommunikasie invloede

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Accredited Business Communicator
ABET	Adult Based Education and Training
ABOK	African Body of Knowledge Project
ACEJMC	Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications
AMOS	Amos structural equation modelling software
APR	Accredited public relations practitioner
APRA	*Azərbaycan İctimaiyyətlə Əlaqələr Assosiasiyası* (Azerbaijan Public Relations Association)
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CCI	Corporate Communication International
CERP	*Confédération Européenne des Relations Publiques* (European Public Relations Confederation)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CiB	Communicators in Business
CIPR	Chartered Institute of Public Relations
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPD	Continuous professional development
DPRG	*Deutsche Public Relations Gesellschaft* (German Public Relations Association)
EBOK	European Body of Knowledge Project
EUPRERA	European Public Relations Education and Research Association
FAPRA	Federation of African Public Relations Associations
GA	Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (Global Alliance)
GCN	Government Communication Network (UK)
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
ICMW	Industrial Council of Mining Workers
IMPRO	Institute of Municipal Public Relations Officers
IOD	Institute of Directors
IPR	Institute for Public Relations
IPRA	International Corporate Communication Association
ISO	International Standards Organisation
MAC Charter	Marketing, Advertising and Communication Charter

NUM	National Union of Mine Workers
PRCA	Public Relations Consultants Association
PRCC	Public Relations Consultants' Chapter
PRSC	Public Relations Student Chapter
PRIA	Public Relations Institute of Australia
PRISA	Public Relations and Communication Management Institute of Southern Africa
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
PRSSA	Public Relations Student Society of America
PRVA	*Public Relations Verband Austria* (Austrian Public Relations Association)
RMSEA	Root Mean Sqaure Error of Approximation
SAACI	South African Association for the Conference Industry
SACOMM	South African Communication Association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAGA	Southern African Grantmakers' Association
SAIF	South African Institute of Fundraising
SANEF	South African National Editors Forum
SPRI	*Schweizerische Public Relations Institut* (Swiss Public Relations Institute)
SPRG	*Schweizerische Public Relations Gesellschaft* (Swiss Public Relations Society)
SPSS	SPSS statistical data analysis software
SEM	Structural equation modelling
SHEC	Safety, Health, Environmental and Community
SVIK	*Schweizerische Verband für interne Kommunikation* (Swiss Association for Internal Communication)

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1. INTRODUCTION

> *HEAR THIS:*
> *I am not a flack, a shill, a barker, a hustler, or a spinner.*
> *I do not stonewall, distort language, construct false images, or blindly follow directions in the interests of my organization or its leaders.*
> *I am a public relations professional, and what I do is serve my organization, society, and profession as a communicator, professional, advocate, and activist.*
> *I believe in public relations and its potential to help organizations make good choices and do the right things in a dynamic, often turbulent world. This is the core of [the] practice. Everything else I do, from writing to media relations to strategic counsel, is wrapped in layers of practice around this fundamental belief.*
>
> (Berger & Reber, 2006:247)

Why is it necessary to have such a strong statement on what public relations[1] entails? Why is it necessary for public relations professionals to declare the importance of the function in various manifestos (ref. Arthur W Page Society, 2010; Berger & Reber, 2006:247; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:1-18) and make statements indicating that the profession is now becoming more acknowledged (Drobis, 2002:2-3; Grunig, 2006b:3; Sorrell, 2008:1)?

Practitioners in the medical, accounting or legal professions do not need to make strong statements on the importance of their profession or strongly defend the reason for their profession's existence. As Margaret Thatcher (Lewis, 2009a) stated: "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

[1] *The words 'public relations' and 'corporate communication' will be used interchangeably or in correlation with the source used. Please refer to section 1.8.1. for a further explanation.*

Although public relations is seen as a function that contributes to the greater good of society and organisational performance (ref. Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xii), the function does not, for various reasons, always deliver on this promise (ref. Gray, 2004:26-27; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:166, 169, 192; Steyn, 2000c:40; Tobin, 2004:56; Van Ruler, 1997:248, 263; 2004a:123). Therefore correctional and motivational statements such as the foregoing are often made.

This study tries to understand why public relations often does not live up to expectations of the function, by examining the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance in top performing South African orgnisations.

1.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES AND LESSONS GLOBALLY

The application of the generic corporate communication principles of excellence (Grunig, 2006a) in each individual country[2] differs according to the specific culture, political system, economic system, extent of activism, level of development and media system of that country (Grunig, 2001:19; 2006a; Le Roux & Naudé, 2006:1-31; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:2). How practitioners negotiate the challenges of adapting his or her knowledge and experience to his or her own country will influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

Both Sriramesh (2003a:xxv) and Van Ruler and Verčič (2002:5), as argued in the Bled Manifesto, posit that countries can learn from each other by discussing the fundamentals of public relations and the application thereof in their own countries, while keeping the above factors (culture, political system, economic system, extent of activism, level of development and media system) in mind. This global knowledge can assist practitioners to operate strategically in their own environment (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003b:xxiii; ref. Bentele, 2004:492), as well as add to the growth of the function (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:93). As Sriramesh (2003a:xxv) stated, "I believe that in the new millennium, every public relations professional must have a multicultural and global perspective in order to be effective".

---

[2] Within the public relations field reference is made to country-specific or related variables influencing the practitioner. However in some cases reference is then made to 'regions' (such as Europe or Asia), while still referring to 'country(ies)'. Within this framework, the researcher will keep to the accepted label of 'country(ies)'.

In light of the above, the challenges and lessons learned from developed and developing countries will be discussed. Since the public relations environment differs between developed and developing countries, the challenges and lessons in each of these contexts will be discussed separately. A further section will then describe the unique South African public relations environment.

1.2.1. Public Relations Challenges and Lessons Learned from Developed Countries

1.2.1.1. Different countries support different public relations paradigms

An aspect that adds complexity to the discipline of public relations is the fact that different countries practice public relations from different perspectives.

European public relations academics and practitioners support the reflective paradigm (see section 2.2.2.2.), which differs from the relational paradigm practised in the USA (see section 2.2.2.1.) (Steyn, 2004:64; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:373). The USA originated relational paradigm suggests that the organisation select stakeholders and then form relationships with them, whereas in Europe it is expected that the organisation should initiate relationships with stakeholders and make behavioural changes, in order to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Steyn, 2004:64-66; Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:169). The focus in Europe is on being publicly orientated, having a long-term focus, and being less profit orientated (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:171). Therefore social responsibility, ethical behaviour and the organisation's responsibility to obtain a *licence to operate* (legitimacy) are of great importance in these countries (Verčič *et al.*, 2001:377). Public relations in Europe are in most cases researched from a sociological point of view, as it is seen to take ownership of communication which influences people, and therefore create society and reality (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:299).

Public relations in Europe are hence seen as a professional management function that is different from other managerial functions (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:167-168). The public relations management function therefore maintains and manages relationships and communication processes for mutual understanding, and are reflective (responsible in society), educational (to teach members of the organisation to become communicatively responsible), and operational (execution of action plans) (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:172-173).

In reply, USA public relations focuses on striving toward two-way symmetrical communication in order to build mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders, in order to ensure the organisation's survival (Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:x; Hon & Grunig, 1999:2; Jahansoozi, 2006:62-63; Ledingham, 2003:181; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii). From this point of view, organisational actions such as corporate social responsibility, is then practiced as it would assist with the maintenance of the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders.

In general, the function in Europe is seen as broader than the USA definition (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:171). Nessmann (1995:153), however, still argues that the USA has led public relations management development, and that Europe's managerial role only developed after the USA managerial role had been defined.

A debate therefore started between USA and European scholars as to the purpose of public relations. "This debate first manifested itself in the literature in the response by European authors Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütschi and Flodin (2001) to an article by American academic Hutton (1999) on the definitions, domain and dimensions of public relations" (Steyn, 2004:64). The discussion was continued at the Ninth International Public Relations Research Symposium where the topics focused on determining differences on public relations theory and practice in countries other than the USA (Steyn, 2004:64).

As explained above, countries differ on the paradigms followed in public relations, which also influence the naming of the public relations function. Even in countries were there seems to be agreement on the specific paradigm, the definition of the function remains vague. In summary, Van Ruler and Verčič (2005b:297) stated the following: "Public relations in Europe is a thriving industry, but without European identity and representation." Although it would seem that scholars in the USA are clearer on this issue, most other countries globally still battle to find consensus on the naming of the function and approach, that represent all the practitioners in each specific country.

Countries outside the USA have started to develop their own paradigms and bodies of knowledge on public relations. Similarly, South Africa will also need to develop its own, or adapt the current globally used paradigms and approaches to public relations, in order to fit the local conditions (ref. Steyn, 2004:68). Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that all practitioners and academics in one country may not be inclined to support a single paradigm.

1.2.1.2. Domination of USA public relations knowledge

Public relations knowledge has been dominated by USA research and literature, with little research on the nature of public relations in various other countries (Sriramesh, 2003a:xxv). One reason could be that large public relations studies, such as the Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992c:1-666), the Velvet Ghetto Studies (Hon *et al.*, 1992:422-424), and the Practitioner Role Studies (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597-600; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205-207; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-146), were initially conducted in the USA. USA academics also published their works widely and mostly in English, a language accessible to many scholars in other countries. Even countries like Australia and New Zealand, that were fairly isolated from public relations development in the rest of the world in the time before the advent of the Internet and even airmail, were still influenced by USA knowledge (Motion & Leitch, 2005:49).

Developed countries, other than the USA, have only recently started to document their research on the landscape within which the function had to develop within their specific context. However, many parallels were found between Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and USA practitioners. These included that females are predominant in the profession; journalists have moved into the profession; and the general status of the profession is still not acknowledged, which makes it difficult for practitioners to prove their contribution to the organisation (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:112, 115, 116; Motion & Leitch, 2005:49-52; Xavier *et al.*, 2005:417-424).

In contrast, USA professional bodies[3], which encourage public relations research, were established fairly early. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was formed in 1947 and their first drive towards accreditation already started in 1964 (Skinner *et al.*, 2007:20). In 1970 two further professional bodies were formed: the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) (Skinner *et al.*, 2007:20).

Although it may seem that countries outside the USA are negative towards the Americanisation of public relations, the extended knowledge created in the USA still provides food for thought in other countries. The USA still has a leading role to play in stimulating

[3]*Public relations professional bodies are also referred to as public relations associations, in correlation with the source used.*

thinking about and the development of public relations globally. However, it is up to each individual country to research and publish the public relations work and research in their particular environment.

1.2.1.3. The role of professional bodies

Public relations in developed countries had strived for professionalism by establishing professional bodies, investigating education standards, and implementing career paths for practitioners. However, in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom, public relations is still an "… unlicensed profession …" (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:115), although accreditation is available from the local and IABC professional bodies, as well as from industry-specific bodies (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:115). In Canada, mandatory licensing of the profession was supported by practitioners in the 1980s. However, this never materialised (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:115).

Nevertheless, professional bodies have a role to play in the professionalisation of the function, not only in supporting minimum educational requirements for practitioners, but also in advocating the function within business. The main problem is that most practitioners still do not belong to professional bodies, which still leads to inadequate statistics and difficulty to conduct a trend analysis of the function. Then again, one does need to take into consideration that membership of a professional body and even Chartered Status (accreditation as in the United Kingdom) does not necessarily secure a good reputation for the function (Tobin, 2004:56-64).

One could argue that in the case of Austria, were practitioners are selected by the professional body to become a member, might add to the professionalisation of the function, as being elected implies professionalism. In South Africa, this application that *does not* entitle people practicing communication to become members of a professional corporate communication body of their choice, may be considered a human rights violation.

Another result of the lack of membership of a professional body is that it complicated the estimation of the size and characteristics of the public relations industry. Even in developed countries it is difficult to estimate the public relations industry (O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:10). For instance, Gregory (in Koper, 2004:469) states that in 2003 the expense for public relations was estimated to be £1.2 billion, and more than 30 000 people were employed in the function, while O'Connor and Falconi (2003:9) state that, "The UK public relations industry has a turnover in excess of £1.5 billion and employs an estimated 40,000 people".

Such estimations are further complicated as there are many part-timers, and job titles did not always include the words *public relations* (Davis, 2004:185).

Professional bodies should also determine educational standards and career paths for public relations professionals. Currently there is a lack of a clear career path for practitioners in terms of the skills and competencies on which practitioners should be focussing (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:26). This lack of an agreed and clear skill set and competencies was identified in spite of existing professional qualifications available for practitioners to complete (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:27). In addition, in the United Kingdom it was found that highly skilled practitioners do not manage to grow in their careers. Various reasons are offered for this stagnation, including opportunism, inexperience, misuse of expense accounts, previous propaganda, and reporting to board-level marketing directors (L'Etang, 2004:227; Tobin, 2004:61).

In Canada, Australia and New Zealand, public relations education is widely available and includes short courses, diplomas and tertiary education (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005: 115; Motion & Leitch, 2005:50). Nevertheless, it was still found that corporate communication practitioners are not sufficiently trained for the tasks expected of them (Gray, 2004:32; Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:112). Davis (2004:193) added that people having qualifications from other disciplines, pursuing other careers and then wanting to move into public relations without the necessary skills, adds to the lack of appropriate skills and competencies.

1.2.1.4. Further public relations challenges and lessons from developed countries

Apart from those mentioned above, developed countries also face other public relations challenges. For instance, Australian corporate communication practitioners stated that their contribution to organisational performance is not recognised, while management found them failing in their tasks (Gray, 2004:26, 27), which lead to practitioners not having access to senior management. Their USA counterparts reported similar challenges. However, Canadian practitioners reported greater access to senior management than their USA colleagues (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:115). This could be due to the fact that the development of the function in Canada was so closely related to governmental development, that a government-wide committee created a vision in 1998 for the communication profession that included developing strategies and plans, stakeholder management, and the evaluation of activities (Johansen & Ferguson, 2005:114). It would seem that such support from government assisted in furthering the public relations profession in Canada.

In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge that public relations is still viewed as an emerging function in developed countries and that the question as to what exactly the function entails, is still under investigation (ref. Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:297). This continued strive to further the function and invest in research into the nature and status of the discipline adds to the growth of public relations.

However, one needs to keep in mind that developed countries face a very different environment compared to developing countries. For instance, developed countries do not deal with the typical developmental challenges, where public relations practitioners cannot for instance, always make use of the latest online technology to communicate with a wider variety of stakeholders (Motion & Leitch, 2005:52).

1.2.2. Public Relations Challenges and Lessons Learned from Developing Countries

1.2.2.1. Professionalisation

Many developing countries hope that professional status would add to the recognition of the function (APRA, 2004), but have no formal professional accreditation process in place, as is the case in Asia (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008:94-114), or even a public relations body or code of ethics, as is the case in Malta (Bonello, 2004). Interestingly, some countries that have faced dramatic social and political change, such as Azerbaijan, now do have professional bodies (for example the Azerbaijan Public Relations Association (APRA)), but these are still very young (APRA, 2004).

Brazil used a different approach in attempting to professionalise the function. Against the background of the strict military regime, this country was the first to adopt legislation on public relations, which includes the requirement of the practitioner having a public relations degree and being licensed by the state's regional council (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:271, 272). According to Molleda and Athaydes (2003:271, 276) this situation benefits practitioners and clients and guards against encroachment from other functions. However, although licensing eliminates or guards against unwanted practitioners, many people continue to illegally practise the function. It was found that licensing the discipline in Brazil proved to have limited value in eliminating unwanted practitioners and practices, specifically when practitioners used naming conventions different from the term *public relations* (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:276, 277).

Further aspects that complicated professionalisation in Brazil were that, first, legislation on public relations had to be regularly updated to stay abreast of the definition of the profession and in setting educational standards. Second, licensing had to be carefully maintained, well regulated and managed to be effective, and third, that academics who taught public relations courses were not clear on the content to be included in such courses (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:273,274, 278). In summary, the situation in Brazil has taught practitioners that even though the function may be licensed, it is only recognised when the appropriate competencies are demonstrated (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:274; ref. Tobin, 2004:56-64).

In Africa, where most countries have their own public relations associations, the Federation of African Public Relations Associations (FAPRA) has tried to provide a central body for all the African public relations associations (Steyn, 2005b:15-16) to promote an unique African view of public relations. In addition, the association tried to discuss the nature of African public relations at various conferences. However, these discussions and their resulting contribution were limited as FAPRA experienced a lack of resources, communication difficulties and a lack of general professional direction in the field of public relations (Steyn, 2005b:15-16).

1.2.2.2. Education for public relations professionals

In many developing countries, it is believed that better public relations education will improve the quality of public relations practised, as well as create recognition for the function (APRA, 2004; Bonello, 2004).

Public relations education in Africa includes short courses, in-service training, diplomas, tertiary degrees, postgraduate degrees and distance-learning degrees. However, in many cases teachers / lecturers lack appropriate knowledge and public relations experience, and, often, public relations is taught as part of another course, for example marketing or business management (Brkic & Husic, 2004:57, 65; Rensburg, 2002:13; Steyn, 2005b:16-17). Furthermore, in many cases, public relations education has to be obtained in countries other than the country where the function will be practised (Bonello, 2004; Sriramesh, 2005:46), since many of these developing countries still battle with the necessary infrastructure for the practice and its education (Hajoš & Tkalac, 2004:92; Molleda & Suárez, 2005:24). Sriramesh (2005:47) added that, “Even the few public relations graduate courses that currently exist in Asia are predominantly skills oriented and generally lack theoretical and methodological rigor, which inhibits efforts at advancing education and the profession”. It was also found that the education and the words used to describe *public relations* refer back to media relations

and one-way communication as was practiced in the specific country before social and political change, as is the case in Bosnia, as an example of the Sovietblock countries (Brkic & Husic, 2004:58).

The lack of an established academic background to public relations has led to public relations in Asia being limited in its contribution to the global body of knowledge (Sriramesh, 2005:46) and to the discipline being more underdeveloped than in the USA (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008:94-114). Similarly, public relations education in Africa (excluding South Africa), is also limited, which leads to encroachment from journalists, confusion between the disciplines of public relations, marketing and advertising, and practitioners who are not appropriately skilled (Steyn, 2005b:15).

1.2.2.3. Dealing with developmental issues

As mentioned earlier, the lack of infrastructure (such as for example information and communication technology-, transport-, educational-, and electric infrastructure) places serious limitations on public relations in some developing countries (ref. Hajoš & Tkalac, 2004:92; Molleda & Suárez, 2005:24). The strength of the economy, however, also influences this function. For instance, in Malta and Colombia, organisations cannot afford to employ practitioners and do not have sufficient public relations budgets, thereby limiting the execution of public relations plans owing to great economic inequality and a lack of resources (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:24). Organisations are also forced to stand in for social welfare (social responsibility) as the state does not have enough resources (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:24).

Public relations in Africa, specifically, faces country developmental challenges that the practitioner needs to keep in mind, over and above those already mentioned. This includes the influence of HIV/AIDS as it is "… erasing the economically active people in Africa" (Rensburg, 2002:3). African culture is also very different from others found globally and, according to Rensburg (2002:10), has never been completely understood by Western scholars, which could also be due to the little information on public relations available in Africa (Steyn, 2005b:17). Due to the nature of African culture, it might also be necessary to adapt public relations, as practiced in Western societies, to the collective Afrocentric view (ref. Newsom *et al.*, 2007:58; Van Heerden, 2004:121, 238, 241). Illiteracy and limited social development also play a huge negative role in public relations in Africa. Therefore there is a need to understand and contribute to the global body of knowledge on how public relations are practised within the African environment (Rensburg, 2002:6).

1.2.2.4. Influence of governmental structures on public relations

One must bear in mind that Bosnia and Azerbaijan, as examples of the former Sovietblock countries, had very specific, extreme political environments in which public relations professionals had to operate. Previously a socialist system was in use that did not allow for any public relations activities or open and transparent communication (Brkic & Husic, 2004:56; Tsetsura, 2004:342). Even the media was controlled by government (Brkic & Husic, 2004:56). However, as such countries go through political, economic and social change, public relations is gradually allowed to be practiced and the function can evolve.

Colombia poses a very specific and extremely challenging environment for public relations practitioners owing to the political climate in the country (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:22). Practitioners tend to keep a *low profile* owing to security concerns; encroachment on the profession by other disciplines such as journalism; and a lack of trust in institutions owing to the political and economic turmoil in the country (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:21, 25). Public relations in government also seem to serve the interest of personalities and not that of institutions and, to add to this situation, lobbying practices are not regulated, which leads to opportunities for corruption (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:26, 27). Owing to all these factors, most public relations initiatives in Columbia to date focused internally on the organisation to build employee motivation and trust, and external communication is usually outsourced (Molleda & Suárez, 2005:23, 27, 28). Although the situation is not as extreme in South Africa, it is good to match South African public relations challenges against those faced by practitioners in other countries, in order to gain some perspective on the extent of the public relations challenges faced globally.

Public relations in Africa achieved momentum in the last two decades (Steyn, 2005b:15). The challenge of public relations in Africa is that it needs to be "… consistent with political ideologies, levels of development, and socio-political controls" (Steyn, 2005b:15), which differ in various African countries. In many cases in Africa, public relations is still utilised as a tool in the hands of people with power, which is often the politicians (Rensburg, 2002:13).

1.2.2.5. Influence of culture

Culture also plays an important role in developing the practice of public relations in different developing countries. For instance, public relations in Asia was focused on *spin doctoring* and portrayed negatively in the mass media (Sriramesh, 2005:43). Currently, however, there is a move toward creating more culturally sensitive ways of conducting public relations

(Sriramesh, 2005:44) as the modest Asian cultures are influencing the profession by demanding that respect and humility is engraved in the practice. Asian cultures have also led to very few female public relations practitioners in senior positions (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka 2008:94-114). With the influence from the Western organisations moving into Asia, the function is being practised more professionally (Sriramesh, 2005:43).

In Azerbaijan, as an example of the former USSR culture and religion, female practitioners in leading positions must be substituted by male practitioners (Tsetsura, 2004:336).

1.2.2.6. Labelling developing countries as *less good* in public relations

One should not disregard public relations in developing countries by evaluating it as *less good* or *on a poorer standard* than the function in developed countries. Steyn (2005b:17) stated: “It is, however, clear that there are pockets of excellence in public relations practice and education on the African continent”. In addition Rensburg (2002:15) argued that “It is therefore a mistake to think of Africa as totally unsophisticated where public relations is concerned”.

It is important to note that developing countries need the influence of developed countries to stimulate the growth of the function in their own countries. Developing countries need to find the most effective application of the profession for their specific environment, and also need to find their own voice within global public relations literature, research and publications.

1.3. THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS LANDSCAPE

1.3.1. A Description of the South African Public Relations Landscape

Public relations and communication management in South Africa can be seen as a large industry in terms of Rand value. The industry is estimated to employ around 10 000 people and the turnover for the industry in 2003 was estimated in excess of R4 billion (O’Connor & Falconi, 2003:32).

This industry has also taken the lead in Africa on, for example, producing public relations literature (Rensburg, 2002:12). Furthermore, South Africa was the first country to compile a body of knowledge for public relations in Africa in 1980; Public Relations and Communication

Management Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) was the first public relations association globally, to obtain International Standards Organisation (ISO) certification and was a founding partner of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management[4]; and South Africa published the first text book on strategic public relations (Rensburg, 2002:15; Smith, 2002:6; Steyn, 2005a:793). Role research in South Africa has also made huge advances in defining and empirically verifying the role of the strategist, manager and technician within the South African environment (Everett, 2006:135-139; Steyn, 2000a:37; 2000c:37-38). The specific South African roles identified require different skills and make different contributions to the organisation than the manager and technician roles identified in the USA. The South African roles furthermore differs from the European monitoring and evaluation; trouble shooting; problem solving; key policy and strategy advisor; issues-management expert; and communication technician roles (ref. Everett, 2006:135-139; Moss *et al.*, 2005:879-883; Steyn, 2000a:37; 2000c:37-38).

It is argued that South Africa's developmental context and ever-changing political and economic situation should lead to a great need for the existence and excellence of corporate communication as a function, as this function becomes even more crucial in fast-changing environments where stakeholders relationships can be more volatile (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:3; Grunig, 1992a:19). Despite this, South African corporate communication practitioners still face challenges in demonstrating their contribution to organisational performance. South African corporate communication departments and practitioners face factors such as downsizing and affirmative action (Visagie, 1999:148), which seem directly in contrast with the increased need for the existence and contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance in a rapidly changing environment.

1.3.1.1. Studies conducted on the South African public relations landscape

A few studies were conducted in South Africa to investigate and provide more information on the unique public relations landscape. The first was the study by Petersen *et al.* (2002:1-29), and the second a study by Holtzhausen (2005:407-416). Then followed the Corporate Communication International (CCI) study titled *Corporate Communication Practices and Trends South African Benchmark Study 2007/2008*, conducted by De Wet *et al.* (2008:1-31),

[4] *The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GA) is an umbrella organisation that links public relations professional associations globally in order to provide these organisations with leadership, cooperate efforts in order to tackle common problems and to increase professionalism (GA, 2010).*

and a study on the professionalisation of the function in South Africa that was conducted by Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008: 224-229).

These studies found that the public relations practitioner landscape in South Africa has the following main characteristics:

- Most practitioners are female. Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) reported the figure at 64% females; De Wet *et al.* (2008:3) reported 57.7%; and both Petersen *et al.* (2002:11) and Holtzhausen (2005:409) reported 70% of respondents to be female.
- Practitioners are highly educated. Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) specifically reported that 37% of practitioners have four-year degrees, Honours or four-year diplomas; 27% held a three-year degree or diploma, and 25% a Masters degree. De Wet *et al.* (2008:3) found that 34.6% of respondents held a degree; 26.9% an Honours degree; 19.2% a Masters degree; and 7.7% a doctorate. Holtzhausen (2005:409) found more than 90% of respondents degreed, and Petersen *et al.* (2002:11) found that 78% of respondents had formal education beyond high-school level, with 14.5% having a Masters degree and 1% a doctorate. In these studies respondents were only asked to indicate their level of education, regardless of it being specifically in corporate communication or other disciplines[5].
- According to Petersen *et al.* (2002:11), half of the respondents reported a combination of Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews, but were leaning more towards the Eurocentric views.
- It was argued that most practitioners perform all roles. This indicates multi-skilling and multi-tasking (Petersen *et al.,* 2002:14). De Wet *et al.* (2008:8-10) reported on how practitioners viewed the functions of corporate communication (those of strategist, manager, and technician) and the specific tasks they perform, but not specifically the roles that they perform.
- Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) found that most practitioners (97%) argue that professionalisation of the public relations industry is necessary. De Wet *et al.* (2008:17) agreed, and found that respondents were in favour of professionalisation that focused mainly on improving the body of knowledge.

[5] In Petersen et al.'s (2002:11-12) study respondents were asked what education level they held and then if they had public relations training before starting their first job, and in which country this education took place. Therefore education levels of 'public relations specific education' were not taken into account.

Although the foregoing studies have done South Africa a service by providing information on corporate communication practitioners and the corporate communication field, there are certain concerns. The CCI study conducted by De Wet *et al.* (2008:1-31) to determine trends and practices in South African public relations, used a convenience sample of 26 top organisations. The sample selection, although scientific, could, owing to the representativity of the sample of practitioners in all the top performing organisations, be considered too small to provide a benchmark of trends and practices in South Africa, although it does provide valuable information.

In the Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:226-227, 229) study, convenience sampling was used, although with a much larger sample of 1 213 respondents of whom 900 were registered members of PRISA. However, only 49 responses were received for this study, resulting in a 4% response rate. This response rate is very low and, as the researchers themselves suggested, is a limitation of the study (Niemann-Struweg & Meintjies, 2008:229).

Of these 49 respondents, 65% were PRISA members. Following a similar trend, the studies of Petersen *et al.* (2002:9) and Holtzhausen (2005:409) included only PRISA members as part of the sample, resulting in a general bias towards PRISA members in the studies on the South African public relations landscape.

In many other previous studies, it was found that the minority of corporate communication practitioners actually belong to a professional organisation. O'Connor and Falconi (2003:2), for instance, argued that only one twelfth of practitioners globally actually belong to a professional body. Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:225) further agreed that PRISA membership consists of approximately 3 500 practitioners, with many practitioners falling outside its membership. When taking into account the estimation that approximately 10 000 people were employed in the profession in 2003 in South Africa (O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:32), one can argue that the foregoing samples are not representative of public relations practitioners working in high-performing organisations' in South Africa. Membership of the other main professional body active in South Africa – the IABC – was not taken into account in the samples of these studies.

It is clear that the abovementioned studies' results are restricted by their sampling methodology, limiting the studies in terms of size and scope. Therefore, more information on the South African public relations landscape – obtained by a study without the limitations mentioned – is necessary in order to fully understand the functioning of the discipline within the unique South African context.

1.3.1.2. The role of tertiary institutions in the South African public relations landscape

Tertiary institutions in South Africa have led public relations research, and act as custodians for this discipline.

The University of Pretoria conducted two major research studies. The university applied the Excellence Study to the South African context in two phases[6]. The first phase focused on training in public relations and concluded that public relations training should include management, strategic communication, and organisational communication skills. The second phase focused on shared expectations between the practitioner and organisational management. This phase firstly found that South African Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) expect the public relations practitioner to enact a strategic role, although practitioners in many instances are still lacking in this role (Steyn, 2005a:797). Secondly, the University of Pretoria embarked on an African Body of Knowledge Project (ABOK), similar to the European Body of Knowledge Project (EBOK), which investigates the state of public relations in African countries (Steyn, 2005a:797; Verčič, 2000:341).

Other universities focus on different aspects of the discipline. The North-West University and the University of the Free State, for instance, focus on developmental communication, and the University of Johannesburg on integrated marketing communication. In addition, the University of the Free State publishes *Communitas*, a journal on community communication and information impact, and the University of Johannesburg publishes *Communicare*, a general journal for communication sciences in Southern Africa. This is apart from the general informational magazines published for their members by both PRISA and IABC.

Unfortunately, the valuable research information on public relations is not accessible to all practitioners in practice, or practitioners may not be interested in this information, due to it not always being pratically relevant and in some instances being *too academic*. This lack of knowledge sharing could be argued to limit the growth of the function.

[6] *The study at the University of Pretoria was initiated in 1997 and concluded in 2003 (Steyn, 2005a:797; 2007:137).*

1.3.2. Public Relations Challenges in South Africa

1.3.2.1. Various paradigms of public relations in use

Another challenge faced in South Africa, similar to other countries, is that practitioners and academics in South Africa do not all support the same paradigm in the practice of public relations (Steyn, 2004:68). Furthermore some of the public relations paradigms supported by practitioners and academics are in direct conflict with one another. This could be expected in a country that is very diverse in terms of culture (Rensburg, 2002:10). It should also be kept in mind that both indigenous African communication practices and Western public relations need to be *combined* in this country (Petersen *et al.*, 2002:9-10).

Although most South African practitioners and academics view public relations as important in building and maintaining stakeholder relationships, they somehow do not necessarily equate public relations with relationships (Rensburg, 2002:10). This leads to many practitioners and academics supporting and practising the persuasive paradigm[7], while others practise the two-way symmetrical paradigm[8] (Steyn, 2004:68).

This situation leads to various other problems such as a lack of consensus on the naming convention for the profession; a continued search for identity and professional recognition' and encroachment on the public relations function by other disciplines (Rensburg, 2002:9; Steyn, 2005a:795, 798).

1.3.2.2. Public relations education in South Africa

Public relations education in South Africa is a combination of opportunities and limitations.

Although focused public relations education and general education, which includes public relations courses, are offered at diploma and degree and postgraduate level (Rensburg, 2002:12; Steyn, 2005a:797), many practitioners still lack strategic public relations skills

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[7] *The persuasive paradigm entails "..the manipulation of public behaviour for the benefit of the sponsoring organisation" (Steyn, 2004:59).*

[8] *The focus of the two-way symmetrical paradigm is on the use of transparent and ethical communication that balances the organisations' and stakeholders' interest and thereby creating long-term relationships (Grunig, 1989:38, 40; 2001:14; Grunig & White, 1992:42-43). For a more detailed discussion see sections 1.7.1.3. and 2.2.2.3.*

(Steyn, 2005a:795). At only one university, the University of Pretoria, the public relations department is located within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, as required for public relations training in South Africa (Groenewald, 1998b:18-19; Rensburg, 2002:12). Most public relations departments in universities are located in the Faculties of Humanities (Rensburg, 2002:12). Many practitioners also come from a journalistic background (Steyn, 2005a:795) that had not afforded them training on, or exposure to the two-way symmetrical paradigm of public relations, which has been proven to lead to excellence and therefore contributes to organisational performance.

Although public relations education in South Africa is considered the most developed in Africa, it has been isolated from the rest of Africa (Ferreira, in Rensburg, 2002:8). Steyn (2005a:793), however, holds the view that practitioners have had contact with Southern African Development Community (SADC) members. This limited contact with others throughout the continent has not only led to limited development opportunities, but new ideas and applications in the profession, as well.

To allow for corrective action, many large public relations agencies offer training for their employees to obtain the appropriate skills. Practitioners can also attend courses, short courses, and workshops offered by various institutions, including PRISA (Steyn, 2005a:795, 797) and the IABC. PRISA has also had their three-year diploma accredited with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) (UK) (Steyn, 2005a:797). In a new development, the CIPR is working with PRISA and the University of Pretoria to offer their internationally accredited courses to South African practitioners (Wolthenströme, 2008).

South African academics also frequently attend international conferences (including those in Europe and the USA) to stimulate them and to contribute to the international discussion on public relations. A positive move by academics in the public relations field in South Africa was to pledge to strive towards a mentoring program for public relations practitioners via the Intercontinental Public Relations Academic Network that will share ideas, knowledge and skills within academic circles (Marsland, 2006).

Unfortunately, this information does not always reach the practitioners as conference papers and insights are published in accredited academic journals that are not easily accessible to practitioners. Practitioners are also limited in terms of time, funds and infrastructure to attend these courses and conferences to gain further exposure.

1.3.2.3. Lacking membership of a professional body

Both PRISA, which includes two chapters, namely the Public Relations Consultants' Chapter (PRCC), and the Public Relations Student Chapter (PRSC) (O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:32; Rensburg, 2002:15), and the IABC operate as professional bodies for public relations in South Africa. Additionally, there are also three professional bodies aimed at specific practitioners (Steyn, 2005a:794-795). They are as follows:

- The South African Communication Association (SACOMM) for academics
- UNITECH, an association for public relations and marketing professionals employed by universities (and the institutions previously labelled technikons), and
- the Institute of Municipal Public Relations Officers (IMPRO).

Membership of all these organisations is voluntary (O'Connor, & Falconi, 2003:32). This together with the lack of perceived value added by the professional bodies and the lack of a leadership role performed, leads to limited membership numbers (see section 1.3.1.1.). Ferreira (2008:450) argues that even educators in public relations select not to be members of professional bodies. Although these bodies have the right to remove practitioners from their membership lists for unethical behaviour, no such incident has occurred to date.

The professional bodies in South Africa are hence not viewed as authoritative bodies on the profession that can give guidance, and lead the discipline to professionalisation.

1.3.2.4. The political, economic and social environment

South Africa is still in a process of transformation on its socio-political, cultural and economic level, influenced with a strong political flavour (Leonard & Grobler, 2006:391; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:137). This transformation includes, amongst other aspects, black economic empowerment and affirmative action, of which many people specifically at grass-roots level had great expectations (Leonard & Grobler, 2006:392).

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) specifically has impacted on the public relations industry as mentioned in the Marketing, Advertising and Communication Charter (MAC Charter) (Middleton, 2007). In the charter, the importance of transformation is acknowledged. Furthermore, the Charter highlights the need to accelerate opportunities for diversity and growth in order to ensure that membership of professional organisations is representative of the South African population. Professional organisations had to acknowledge the injustices of the past, and commit to transformation of the industry as essential for long-term growth

(MAC Charter, 2005:2). The Charter also includes a scorecard that will measure the professional bodies' progress on these issues (MAC Charter, 2005:4-6).

Literacy levels in South Africa are also low with 24% of adults over 15 years of age being functionally illiterate (Brand South Africa, 2006). This limits the use of the latest technology, such as the internet and social media (Steyn, 2005a:794). The use of cellular telephones are, however, very high. The practitioners thus need to keep the literacy level of their stakeholders in mind at every stage of their planning and implementing processes.

1.3.3. Synopsis on the South African Public Relations Landscape

From the aforementioned is it clear that the South African environment offers the public relations practitioner both challenges and opportunities. This environment has at the very least, forced public relations practitioners and academics to adapt their first-world thinking to include third-world thinking (Steyn, 2005a:793-794) to adjust the practice to the specific challenges faced in the South African environment.

When then considering that:

- first, public relations should contribute to the greater good of society and the performance of the organisation (ref. Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xii), but often do not live up to these expectations of the function (see section 1.1.);
- second, that in this quest public relations professionals globally face various challenges, that are similar in some instances and differ in other instances, as discussed in section 1.2.; and
- third, that South African public relations practitioners in particular face unique challenges, as discussed in section 1.3.2.;

the question as to how the public relations professional, while acknowledging the variables influencing them, can still contribute to organisational performance, are highlighted.

1.4. PUBLIC RELATIONS' CONTRIBUTION TO ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

1.4.1. The Contribution of Corporate Communication to Organisational Performance

Notwithstanding the challenges and lessons learned for public relations globally en specifically in South Africa, one of the burning questions in public relations centres on how the function contributes to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992a:7; Hon & Grunig, 1999:6).

This question can be divided into two separate ones:

- Does public relations contribute to organisational performance or, stated differently, is public relations really needed?
- How is the contribution of public relations to organisational performance measured?

It is of utmost importance for academics and practitioners to understand how public relations contribute to organisation performance, as this will enable them to define the reach and limits of the function.

1.4.1.1. Does public relations contribute to organisational performance?

In 2003, the GA (Valin, 2004) estimated that more than three million individuals were involved in public relations around the world, with an economic impact estimated at 400 billion Euros. A function with a global impact of that nature should be able to show its value to the organisation and its reason for existence. If this cannot be done, the function is at risk to be classified as a *nice to have* expense without which organisations can operate. To not only survive, but thrive, the public relations function needs to be recognised as one that can contribute to organisational performance (Gorman, 2004:34).

It is interesting to note that Vickers (in Varey 2000:329) in 1955 already stated the following: "It is not surprising, I think, that in the literature of business management "communications" has virtually ceased to imply the [mere] exchange of information as such." This statement implies that there was already a feeling in those years that public relations had more to offer to the organisation than simply the dissemination of information. In business today,

communication is seen as "... a crucial piece of the business puzzle" (Gayeski, in Gorman, 2004:34).

The most important contribution that public relations can make, is to assist organisations to *read* and interpret the environment, adapt – while staying socially responsible (as per the reflective paradigm, see section 2.2.2.2.) – and building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (refer to the relational paradigm and two-way symmetrical communication paradigm in sections 2.2.2.1. and 2.2.2.3.). These relationships are seen as such important intangible assets that Ni (2006:277) argued that "Relationships are non-substitutable with tangible resources such as money". The relationships influence the financial and non-financial success criteria of the organisation (Grunig, 2006b:3).

The contribution to organisational performance by public relations is to provide strategic information from the environment that could reduce uncertainty in the organisation's strategic decision-making (Steyn, 2000c:27). As explained by Angelopulo (1990:5, 6), organisations need to conduct business and survive within a context of change. How they adapt to uncertainty is the ultimate test of organisational performance and survival. Many authors (Gayeski, in Gorman, 2004:36; Raupp & Van Ruler, 2006:18; Valin, 2004) agree with Grunig *et al.* (2002:xi) who argue from a perspective of excellence that "… communicators have their greatest value when they bring information *into* the organisation, more than when they disseminate information *out* of the organisation", thus having a strategic role at the boardroom table.

By enacting this boundary-spanning role, public relations align the organisation's basic goals with the realities of the environment in which the organisation operate in order to keep the organisation viable (Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:149). Since public relations practitioners have contact with stakeholders outside the organisation and are aware of trends, stakeholder values, expectations and views via environmental scanning, it is the perfect function to bring this valuable information into the organisation. This action will also distinguish the function from other functions in their contribution to the organisation (Ni, 2006:277; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:264-265; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:148).

The public relations practitioner assists the organisation to remain socially responsible by bringing the voice of society into the strategic decision-making process (Grunig, 2006b:2; Phillips, 2006b:212). Van Ruler and Verčič (2002:16) argue in the Bled Manifesto that "What distinguishes the public relations manager when he sits down at the table with other

managers is that he brings to the table a special concern for broader societal issues and approaches to any problem with a concern for implications of organisational behaviour towards and in the public sphere". By remaining socially responsible, the organisation will improve the quality of its relationships with publics[9] (stakeholders), which will assist the organisation to perform well in its environment (Grunig, 2006b:2; Phillips, 2006b:212) as organisational strategies can only be successfully implemented when good relationships exist between the organisation and its stakeholders (Ni, 2006:277, 279, 280). As a result the practitioner can furthermore own and manage the organisational values (Nielsen, 2006:4) as they have the broader societal view at hand and are therefore in a good position to balance the organisational values with societal issues.

The contribution of public relations can specifically be seen at the strategist level. This, however, does not imply that the managerial and technical level practitioners are not valuable to the organisation. Both play roles that support the strategic practitioner, in order to relieve the strategist of technical and managerial duties in order to focus on strategic tasks.

Unfortunately practitioners cannot show their value by contributing to strategic decision-making, if the practitioner does not have access to the strategic decision-making table (Ni, 2006:276; Steyn, 2000c:23). Various reasons can be given for why practitioners often do not have access to strategic decision-making, for instance that many practitioners and academics still define public relations in terms of activities (technical) and not outcomes (strategic) (Sharpe, 2000:345). Defining public relations as only a technical function is detrimental to the function. As Bütschi and Steyn (2006:106, 108) argued, "Strategic public relations is the key to unlocking the boardroom".

Many academics and practitioners also argue that the professionalisation and institutionalisation of the public relations function will assist practitioners to contribute to the organisation by demarcating the public relations role in the organisation. This issue is viewed as so important that the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) 2008 Conference was dedicated to the topic of institutionalisation (see section 3.8.5.5. for a discussion on institutionalisation and professionalisation of the public relations function).

[9] *Both the terms 'publics' and 'stakeholders' are used in this study, where 'publics' arise when 'stakeholders' and the organisation are confronted with a problem in their relationship (see section 1.8.3.; Steyn & Puth, 2000:5).*

It is therefore clear that public relations has a role to play in the organisation and can contribute to organisational performance. Proving its contribution to the bottom line of the organisation, and using measurable goals to measure the contribution are, however, more difficult.

1.4.1.2. How is the contribution of public relations to organisational performance measured?

Some practitioners and academics argue that public relations can only be effective when management understand the contribution of the function to organisational performance (Bernays, 1986:39). The only way then to assist management in understanding the role of public relations is to measure the function's contribution to the organisation.

How can one then measurably show the contribution of public relations to the organisation? The typical response to this question leads to a deafening silence, as practitioners and academics alike battle to measure specifically the monetary contribution of the function to organisational performance. Measuring the relationship quality with stakeholders and organisational reputation, are easily forgotton as researchers and practitioners forget about these specific measurable objectives.

Many public relations practitioners measure various aspects of their work, but still do not measure aspects that show a contribution or an impact of public relations to the organisation (Xavier *et al.*, 2005:417, 420, 423). For instance, public relations practitioners tend to set objectives and measure in terms of outputs (activities such as newsletter production and circulation, or extent of publicity), rather than setting objectives and measuring their success in terms of outcomes (such as relationship quality and organisational reputation) that relate back to organisational goals (Xavier *et al.*, 2005:417-418, 420-421).

The *King Reports*[10] published in South Africa now provides even more guidance, purpose and motivation for not only the existence of public relations, but also for the function's contribution to organisational performance and the measurement thereof.

[10] *Although now available, the 'King III Report' was not available at the time when the data was collected. Therefore reference in the data reporting phase will refer to the 'King II Report'.*

According to the *King Report on Corporate Governance 2009* (*King III Report*) (King, 2009) published in South Africa, specifically listed companies, financial institutions and public-sector enterprises should focus on measuring their performance in terms of the triple bottom line, which is crucial for organisational survival (PWC, 2009:2). The triple bottom line includes reporting on the principles and practices followed and implemented on the financial, social and environmental level, and the investigation, change and benefit of these aspects (IOD, 2002:4-35, 39) to the organisation. Through the assistance of the public relations practitioner, the organisation is expected to report transparently and objectively on its triple bottom line management and performance to all its stakeholders in a meaningful way (IOD, 2002:10, 34-35, 39). The *King Reports* therefore underscores the existence and contribution of public relations, and has a direct influence on the aspects to be taken into account in the measurement of public relations' contribution to organisational performance.

The first *King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa* (*King I Report*) (King, 1994) and the second *King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa* (*King II Report*) (King, 2002), had a great influence on South African organisations – and the public relations function – and were viewed as containing some of the most progressive corporate governance statements globally (Rossouw, 2005:728). The *King I Report* specifically lead to changes in legislation on employment, labour relations, environmental management, and the listing requirements for organisations on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in South Africa (IOD, 2002:8).

The *King Reports* adapt a participative corporate governance system that means that organisations need to acknowledge that they no longer operate isolated from environment and society (IOD, 2002:6; SAGA, 2002:3), and therefore force a balance between the objectives of both the organisation and society (Rossouw, 2005:729).

The organisation's social responsibility is therefore more than simply a mere legal conformation. It includes that the organisation needs to obtain from society a *license to operate* (Rossouw, 2005:733-734). A *license to operate* can be defined as the trust relationship between the organisation and stakeholders to not harm the other (Rossouw, 2005:734). To obtain a *license to operate* from society, the organisation needs to focus on its responsibility towards society and manage its impact on society (society and environmental levels of the triple bottom line) (Steyn, 2008).

The latest *King Report* (*King III Report*) was published in 2009 (IOD, 2009:1; Steyn, 2008). De Beer (2008), who wrote a chapter on stakeholder management in this report, posits that

the *King III Report* will have a great influence on how public relations contribute to the organisation owing to the focus on stakeholder relationship management as part of good corporate governance. *The Report* "... gives stakeholder relationship management and the corporate communication function legitimacy in the organisation ..." by stating corporate governance requirements for stakeholder relationship management, in line with the two-way symmetrical approach and Excellence Theory (De Beer, in Steyn, B., 2009). *The Report*, however, does not relate stakeholder-relationship management directly to public relations (Steyn, 2008). "King III will spell out the expectations that management have of what should be done in terms of stakeholder relationship management. It will be up to us to decide if we want to take up this challenge. If we don't, we should not complain if the company secretaries and the internal auditors jump at the opportunity to take our seat in the C-suite" (De Beer, 2008).

Differing South African organisations will have to comply with *The Report* on different levels. Large South African organisations now need to report, over and above their financial activities, on their social contribution and environmental contribution (shortly referred to as reporting on profit, planet and people, or sustainability reporting). The gradually increasing focus of the three *King Reports* on the triple bottom line has opened the door for public relations practitioners to move away from *only* trying to prove their worth in terms of contributing to *financial* performance.

The function's contribution to social performance is much more tangible and easier to measure, provided that measurable objectives had been set. However, the function does contribute to organisational performance on all three levels of the triple bottom line, even though measuring the contribution on the financial level remains tricky.

Examples of measuring the contribution of public relations on the three different levels are as follows:

- **On the level of society (people)**

The social or 'people' bottom line includes "… reciprocal relationships with stakeholders …" (IOD, 2002:10, 34-35) that will ensure that the organisation can appropriately adapt to changes in the environment to ensure its survival. This is where public relations can show its greatest contribution as the function is responsible for relationship building and maintenance (see *relationship paradigm*, sections 1.7.1.1. and 2.2.2.1.; *relationship management theory*, 1.7.3.1., and 2.2.4.1.; and *definitions*, 1.8.1.), and by determining the relationship quality

between the organisation and stakeholders (Grunig, 2006a; 2006b:6; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9; Phillips, 2006a:40).

The most commonly used measure to test relationship quality is the Relationship Measurement Scale Questionnaire developed by Hon and Grunig (1999:1-40). A qualitative version of this scale is also available (Grunig, 2002:1-7), although these scales are USA examples and have not been adapted to the South African environment. However, some efforts have been made by Le Roux (2008:264-281) to provide guidelines to adapt this scale to the South African environment. Organisations can track their own progress by measuring stakeholder relationships on a regular basis, and collating the information into a data bank.

Over and above the public relations function's performance on the societal level, the environmental level must also be taken into account.

- **On the environmental level**

Although public relations cannot be held accountable for the environmental performance of an organisation, the function can contribute in two ways: Firstly, by ensuring that the organisation takes stakeholders' (including environmental stakeholders') environmental opinions into account when making strategic decisions, and secondly, by ensuring that reporting on environmental behaviour is reported ethically to all stakeholders.

Except for the social and environmental levels, the public relations practitioner, can also contribute to organisational performance on a financial level.

- **On a financial level**

Grunig (2001:5) argues that public relations, over and above the fact that it contributes to greater society, also contributes to the flow of money into the organisation and by cost saving for the organisation.

> *… public relations help an organization make money by allowing it to sell products and services to satisfied customers, secure funds from constituents or donors, or expand its manufacturing or sales operations. Public relations also save money for the organization that might be spent because of opposition in the community, lawsuits, regulations, boycotts, or training of employees to replace those who leave. When the public relations department helps an organization build good relations with publics, it has value to society as well as to the organization.*
>
> (Grunig, 2001:5)

However, to quantify the financial contribution of public relations in terms of costs saved and good-will created, is difficult. Public relations, in terms of monetary value, has been measured against other functions, for instance advertising or marketing. For those functions, which are capital intensive, it is fairly easy to determine the costs against the income and the resulting return on investment of an organisation (Falconi, 2006:3, 8). Falconi (2006:3, 8) argues that public relations is labour intensive (similar to accounting or the medical profession) and therefore the time invested in activities to build relationships should be measured against the quality of the relationships with stakeholders. Although this argument is closer to an actual financial calculation, it still does not provide public relations with a scientific method to determine its exact, financial contribution. Many practitioners have attempted to measure the financial contribution of public relations, without success.

The author Youngwook Kim (2000:273-291; 2001a:799-815; 2001b:3-26) has done much research on determining the exact financial contribution of public relations. In Kim's view (2001b:4), many practitioners want to show the financial contribution of public relations to move away from *intuition* and *common sense* – the so-called *soft issues* which the function is typically associated with. As public relations is moving toward a function being managed by objectives, "The goal attainment perspective suggests that a public relations goal does not equal its contribution to the bottom line, but public relations can contribute to the bottom line by achieving its goals" (Kim, 2001b:5).
In her studies, Kim (2001b:22) was able to show that public relations expense affects organisational reputation, which in turn affects organisational revenue, indicating that public relations indirectly affects revenue. The study was, however, aimed at estimating bottom-line impact and not at the quality of public relations. Also, more public relations expenditure by an organisation will not automatically lead to the creation of more revenue (Kim, 2001b:22).

Kim (2000:273) used econometric models to test the relationship between public relations goals and their contribution to the organisational bottom line. She found a non-linear model that showed that public relations activities that enhanced reputation actually also contributed to the organisation's bottom line (Kim, 2000:284). The model was tested on *Fortune 500* organisations, but more research is still needed to verify, test and standardise the model. Kim (2000:273-291; 2001b:3-26) showed that the exact financial contribution of public relations to the financial bottom line is difficult to determine, although it is clear that the function does add to the financial bottom line.

Conversely, Professor Anne Gregory (2008) made it clear that her research suggests that practitioners need to show, in some form or another, their contribution to the organisation (for

instance by measuring the relationships with stakeholders), and not only focus on their actions (for example producing newsletters, and the like). She furthermore argued that CEOs accept that public relations is not a function for which the financial contribution can be measured in an exact way, but that the function needs to be accountable to reach certain goals. These goals do not need to be financial, but should focus on appropriate measurements for the function. Furthermore, it is argued that the value of the function is intuitively known, similar to the value of disciplines such as human resources (Gregory, 2008).

If the value of public relations is intuitively known, and its contribution to financial performance of the organisation not expected to be precisely measured, one can argue that academic research focusing on determining the contribution of public relations in precise financial terms may not be aligned with the business needs of the function. Thus, trying to measure the contribution of public relations on a financial level – almost forcing a round peg into a square hole – could be considered a redundant exercise. However, determining the public relations contribution on the *people level*, by measuring relationships, communication and behaviour, seems to be more aligned with the core definition and practice of the function.

This suggestion aligns with the Excellence Study conducted in the USA, which argues that practitioners show their value to the organisation, contribute to the professionalisation of the function, and practice excellence (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 228, 255) by merely using their skills and knowledge. The skills and knowledge include environmental scanning, evaluation research, relationship-building, creating shared expectations between management and the practitioner on the role that she or he should perform, and, lastly, practising ethical and effective corporate communication according to the feminist perspective[11] (Dozier, 1992:335; Dozier & Repper, 1992:186; Hon *et al.*, 1992:429; Plowman, 2005:135, 136; Steyn & Puth, 2000:231; Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:26).

This said, why then is the function often still not recognised and accepted as a function that will keep its promise and contribute to society and organisational performance?

[11] The feminist paradigm highlights the feminine characteristics that benefit public relations as well as the gender aspects on which the practitioner can be stereotyped. See sections 1.7.1.4. and 2.2.2.4. for a further explanation of the feminist paradigm.

1.4.2. Variables Influencing the Contribution of Public Relations to Organisational Performance

Global research has indicated that the dominant coalition[12] view corporate communication practitioners as often not fulfilling their strategic role, not being trustworthy, unable to clearly explain their tasks and purpose, and therefore often not allowed to become part of this elite group as they are not necessarily seen as contributing to organisational performance (Gray, 2004:26-27; Steyn, 2000c:40; Tobin, 2004:56; Van Ruler, 2004a:123). Specifically top management is often still dissatisfied with the performance of the public relations practitioner (Steyn, 2000c:21), limiting membership of the dominant coalition, which is crucial for practitioners to be able to contribute to organisational performance (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:166, 169, 192).

In essence, practitioners' lack of skills and knowledge to understand and address the mentioned variables, often results in them not practising excellent corporate communication by which they can contribute to organisational performance. In these circumstances, practitioners often complain that their skills and contributions are undervalued (Gray, 2004:26), and that opportunities to join the dominant coalition are limited (Reynolds, 2005:5; Sweep *et al.*, 1994:319).

This foregoing implies that, as a result, there is a lack of alignment between the expectations of the practitioner and management, leading to a breakdown between these parties (ref. Steyn, 2000c:21). This conflict between the practitioners' contribution or lack of contribution to organisational performance, and the dominant coalition's perception of the practitioner's contribution or lack thereof to organisational performance, finally leads to the corporate communication function being undervalued in many organisations (Le Roux & Steyn, 2006:30).

Le Roux and Steyn (2006:35-40) and Le Roux (2004:10-18) categorised the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance – as mentioned in global literature – into individual, organisational and professional categories:

- Individual variables include practitioners' beliefs about their own characteristics, their view of communication, and their level of business knowledge and skills.

[12] The dominant coalition is the group of decision-makers in an organisation, which are not always necessarily the management team. See section 1.8.4. for a definition.

- Organisational variables include the organisational view of communication, perceived competence, encroachment on the public relations function, organisational size, gender discrimination and/or stereotyping of the practitioner, the level of information disclosure to the practitioner from management, inclusion in the decision-making process, and different approaches taken by management and communication practitioners in defining their work and behaviours.
- Lastly, professional variables include the move toward a clear definition of corporate communication, the recognition of the public relations profession, associations with the professional legacy of the past, and a clear career path.

Other uncoordinated efforts have been made to identify and eliminate variables that could influence the public relations practitioner and, by default, the organisation's performance. Some authors even included models that depict variables influencing practitioners (Dozier & Broom, 1995:6; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:601; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:217). These models, however, only focused on a limited number of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. Other authors tried to overcome the negative influence associated with some of these variables by stating the skills needed by the practitioner to cross the barriers mentioned (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Kruckeberg, 2000b:145; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Puth, 1994:40-52; Steyn, 2000a:4).

However, one aspect that has not received much attention in all of the foregoing studies, is the influence of country-specific variables on practitioners' performance.

1.4.3. Core of the Problem

The essential question in public relations is to understand how the practice can be improved to increase practitioners' abilities to influence desirable outcomes benefiting the organisation and society they are serving (Sallot, 2005:80). As Grunig (2006b:1) stated: "I believe the practice of public relations is in dire need of conceptualisation (or theoretical thinking) about what public relations is, what its value is to organizations and society, and what it is core value should be."

Practitioners and professional bodies from various countries have tried to overcome the negative influences on practitioners by setting standards for professional training, offering accreditation through professional bodies, and even developing skills and knowledge frameworks for practitioners (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:27). However, none of these actions has led to a sustainable solution for the profession where a critical mass of practitioners can

keep the promise of contributing to the greater good of society and the performance of the organisation.

From the forementioned it is clear that public relations practitioners campaign to show their contribution to organisational performance. This was highlighted by the need for the University of Pretoria to focus the second half of their replication of the Excellence Study on the contribution of the public relations, specifically strategic public relations, to the organisation (see section 1.3.1.2.). However, public relations are still not legitimised by their actions or performance, as found for example in Steyn's (2000b:1-42) studies on the expectations of CEO's on the role of the practitioner.

Many variables – as discussed above – and even variables specific to the country in which the practitioner practises, can be argued to influence this situation. Practitioners and academics thus have no clear picture of which variables have an influence, or even which has a larger or smaller influence on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

As Rensburg (in Marsland, 2006) stated, the question remains as to what public relations should do to add value to business, and that this is unique to every country, including South Africa.

In view of the foregoing, the General research question investigated is:

How can South African corporate communication practitioners enhance their contribution to organisational performance?

1.5. SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the General research question, the following Specific research questions are investigated:

1. Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally?

2. What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

3. How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform?

4. How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

5. What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

6. Which recommendations can be made to enhance the South African corporate communication practitioner's contribution to organisational performance?

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The General research objective for this study is to determine how South African corporate communication practitioners can enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

From the General research objective, the Specific research objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the variables identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally.

2. To determine the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

3. To determine how the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform.

4. To determine how similar the perceptions of South African practitioners are to those of practitioners mentioned in literature.

5. To determine the relationship between the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa.

6. To make recommendations as to how to enhance the South African corporate communication practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

1.7. MAIN THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Not to limit the research, the conceptualisation of the study consists of multiple paradigms and theories, which table 1.1 summarises.

Table 1.1: Conceptualisation of the study

Paradigms	Relational paradigm	Reflective paradigm	Two-way symmetrical paradigm	Feminist paradigm
Domain	Corporate communication			
Meta-theory	General excellence theory			
Theories	Relationship management theory Corporate communication roles theory			

Each paradigm and theory will now be described briefly. Chapter two will focus on the theoretical framework for the study by discussing the paradigms and theories in more detail.

1.7.1. Paradigms Framing the Study

A multi-dimensional paradigm is formulated for this study, as this is believed to assist the researcher in accommodating the complex South African public relations context in which the research has been conducted (ref. Grunig, 1989:18; 2006a; Valin, 2004). In this study the following paradigms were used to frame the study:

1.7.1.1. The relational paradigm

At its core, public relations focuses on building mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders through two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:x; Hon & Grunig, 1999:2; Jahansoozi, 2006:62-63; Ledingham, 2003:181; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii). However, for this paradigm to be practised, the organisation and stakeholders must be willing to engage with one another; both parties must recognise the interdependence on one another; and both must acknowledge the fact that both can influence the other's survival and growth (Broom *et al.*, 2000:15, 17; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160). Organisations, specifically, must also recognise their responsibility to be inherently accountable to society by building relationships with stakeholders (Verčič *et al.*, 2001:382).

The relational paradigm demonstrates how public relations contribute to the organisation through relationship management, and that the contribution can be proven by measuring the quality of these relationships (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:30; Ledingham, 2001:293; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xvi). Specifically, the tasks of bringing information into the organisation and interpreting this information for management, as well as interpreting management information to stakeholders, specify the public relations actions that contribute to organisational performance (Steyn, 2007:139).

1.7.1.2. The reflective paradigm

The reflective paradigm, mostly used in Europe, broadens the relational paradigm (Steyn, 2004:73; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:16). The reflective paradigm argues that organisations need to realise and play their role in the development of society as society demands this from the organisation (Holmström, 2004:121, 126, 128; Steyn, 2004:66-67; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257, 263). In turn, society will then provide the organisation with a *license to operate* (legitimise the organisation), which will ensure the survival of the organisation (Steyn, 2004:66-67; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257).

The focus of the reflective paradigm is therefore that the public relations function must act as the social consciousness of the organisation (Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:139) and the practitioner must understand and convey to the organisation the stakeholders' / society's perspectives, values and views for the organisation to act responsibly, and to contribute to organisational performance (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14). The reflective (listening / mirror) tasks of the practitioner is thus highlighted, as well as the communicating (expressive / window) tasks that are performed at the strategic level (Steyn, 2004:71-72; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:261).

1.7.1.3. The two-way symmetrical communication paradigm

The two-way symmetrical paradigm was conceptualised after analysing the findings of the Excellence Study. The focus of the two-way symmetrical communication paradigm is that mutually beneficial, long-term relationships can be built through transparent and ethical communication (Grunig, 1989:38, 40; 2001:14; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11; Grunig & White, 1992:42-43) in which "the relationships balance the interests of the organisation with the interests of publics" (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11). This type of dialogue implies that both the organisation and stakeholders share power and can change their views to create symbiotic changes in their behaviour owing to the two-way symmetrical conversation (Grunig & White,

1992:39; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:10, 308-309). The two-way symmetrical communication paradigm also allows for an ethical method of practising public relations (Grunig & White, 1992:57; Moncur, 2006:96) in line with the reflective-paradigm suggestions.

A public relations practitioner can consequently manage organisational behaviour and contribute to organisational performance by practising two-way symmetrical communication, based on the principles of excellence (Grunig, 1989:17; Sharpe, 2000:348).

1.7.1.4. The feminist paradigm

The feminist paradigm highlights the feminine characteristics that benefit public relations by ensuring ethical and effective two-way symmetrical communication, which will lead public relations to contribute to organisational performance (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Grunig & White, 1992:50; Hon *et al.,* 1992:429; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:142, 143). These characteristics include displaying a relational orientation (nurturing relationships), facilitating another's development (empowerment), focussing on social responsibility, and valuing diversity. It also includes characteristics such as equality, equity, ethics, fairness, forgiveness, integrity, loyalty, morality, perfection, tolerance, and a focus on quality of life (Grunig *et al.*, 2000:58). This approach to corporate communication correlates with the Excellence Study findings in producing corporate communication that can contribute to organisational performance (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Hon *et al.,* 1992:429).

The feminist paradigm also offers explanations for variables that negatively influence practitioners to make contributions to the organisation. For example, the paradigm alludes to the stereotyping of female practitioners and suggestions for overcoming these obstacles (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:321; Yeomans, 2007:213). It also provides a background against which the management of emotion can be discussed (Yeomans, 2007:213).

In addition, it also focuses on the inclusion of minority groups' views in public relations research, and encourages minority-group researchers to embark on public relations research (Babbie, 2004:40).

Since each of these paradigms is intertwined, their application in this study, as explained above, brings valuable insight.

1.7.2. Meta-theory: General Excellence Theory

A meta-theory should supply rules and assumptions which underlie a certain perspective and through which theories in this area emerge and are evaluated (Littlejohn, 2002:26; Onions, 2006:4; Overton, 2003:13). It therefore limit conceptual confusion as it provides principles that "…both describes and prescribes what is acceptable and unacceptable as theory" (Overton, 2003:13). In essence then meta-theory is theory about theory (Littlejohn, 2002:26), encapsulating the models and theories within the specific paradigm by providing fundamental assumptions about the discipline within the paradigm (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:7). The general excellence theory of public relations provides exactly such a guideline for the field of public relations.

Although the general excellence theory is derived from the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Meintjies & Steyn, 2006:157), it is also supported by the relational, reflective and feminist paradigms. The general excellence theory was developed from an extensive research project that included 327 organisations in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom; 407 senior communication officers; 292 CEOs; and 4 631 employees, and followed-up with qualitative research in 25 of the organisations (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:3). The study has been replicated in other countries such as Slovenia (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xiii), and South Africa (Steyn, 2005a:797).

The general excellence theory posits that excellent corporate communication can contribute to organisational performance when it is practised through two-way symmetrical, idealistic and critical communication through which the organisation builds mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, and can adapt to the environment and align organisational goals with the goals of stakeholders. The public relations function must furthermore be viewed as managerial (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; 1992b:531; 2001:16; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1, 10; Grunig & White, 1992:38, 54, 61; Steyn, 2000c:28). The theory also enforces the socially responsible behaviour of the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xii).

This normative theory provides generic principles for public relations that describe the characteristics of the practitioner and the organisational culture in which the public relations function will be able to contribute to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992:16-17, 28; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:543-546; Grunig & White, 1992:38). Stated differently, when practising excellent public relations, the practitioner will be contributing to organisational performance.

1.7.3. Theories used in the Study

Both the relationship management theory and corporate communication roles theory are used in this study.

1.7.3.1. The relationship management theory

The relationship management theory applies the relational paradigm to the practice of public relations.

Through relationships, other corporate values are unlocked, and practitioners can show their contribution to the organisation (Grunig, 2001:13; 2006b:6; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9; Phillips, 2006a:36-37) as strong relationships with stakeholders allow the organisation the freedom to achieve its mission; reduce the costs of regulation, legislation and litigation; reduce the risk of implementing decisions by providing strategic stakeholder information; limits negative publicity; and provides a competitive advantage (Grunig, 2006b:3, 6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 10, 11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:32; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9,11; Phillips, 2006a:34, 35; 2006b:212). This type of relationship can only be fostered through two-way, symmetrical communication (Hon & Grunig, 1999:11).

It has been determined that such a strong long-term organisational relationship consists of six elements (Hon & Grunig, 1999:2) for which Hon and Grunig (1999:1-40) developed a measurement scale to measure relationship quality. The scale measures the concepts of *exchange* and *communal relationships*, *control mutuality*, *trust* (which includes *integrity*, *dependability* and *competence*), *commitment* and *relationship satisfaction*.

1.7.3.2. The corporate communication roles theory

The corporate communication roles theory suggests that practitioners perform various tasks each day, which can be categorised into different roles. These roles, in turn, imply the range of tasks that practitioners should perform and the expertise they should exhibit to practice corporate communication that can contribute to organisational performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000:14; Petersen *et al.*, 2002:1).

Role theory also offers an explanation for why practitioners often do not contribute to organisational performance. For instance, the classification of roles indicates normative expectations of what the practitioner should deliver (Bassett, 1996:37; Johnson, in Botan &

Hazleton, 1989:253-254). Additionally role ambiguity can be negatively experienced by the practitioner while still allowing the practitioner room to act in a strategist role (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:201).

Different roles have been identified in various countries (ref. Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597-600; Petersen *et al.*, 2002:1-4; Moss, 2000:1-2; Moss *et al.*, 2000:278; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-146; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:380). However, for the purposes of this study, the roles as identified and empirically verified in two instances in South Africa will be used. The roles identified in South Africa include the public relations strategist, (redefined) manager, and technician (Everett, 2006:1-65; Steyn, 2000b:21; 2000c:37-38; ref. Petersen *et al.*, 2002:14). For more information on the roles see section 1.8.2. and 2.2.4.2.

1.7.3.3. Synopsis on the use of theories in this study

The assumptions of these theories will be applied to study South African specific variables as perceived by practitioners impacting on their contribution to organisational performance.

The constructs applicable to the theory, as identified in literature, will be discussed in chapter three.

1.8. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions of *corporate communication* and *public relations* will be discussed, as well as the term *corporate communication practitioner*, as these terms lie at the core of the study. For clarity the terms *stakeholder* and *publics*, and *dominant coalition* will also be defined.

1.8.1. Corporate Communication Management and Public Relations

Steyn (2000a:75) posits that corporate communication management is focussed on the management of relationships with stakeholders, ideally by means of symmetrical two-way communication, in order to create mutually beneficial relationships. Van Tonder and Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn (2006:149) agree with the foregoing definition and add that corporate- communication management is "… a powerful strategic management function that sustains dialogue between the organisation and its environment and ensures that the organisation adapts to change and stays relevant and viable". Van Ruler and Verčič

(2005a:263) added that corporate communication management can enable the organisation to develop and prosper.

In essence then, corporate communication management focuses on building relationships with stakeholders through communication to allow the organisation to grow.

Public relations, on the other hand, can be defined as "… the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders, for mutual benefit and a greater social order" (Valin, 2004). Grunig (2006b:2) added that public relations is a "…strategic management function that uses communication to cultivate relationships with publics that have a stake in the behaviour of the organization." The focus is once again on symmetrical communication (Nessmann, 1995:151) and includes all the communication activities that the practitioner needs to do (Grunig, 2006b:2; Sharpe, 2000:345) to assist the organisation to prosper.

There is thus no clear distinction between the essence of the definitions between corporate communication and public relations. Both maintain symmetrical communication with stakeholders to create a relationship that will benefit not only the organisation to survive and prosper, but the stakeholders, as well.

Although the term *(corporate) communication management* is widely used in various countries to place focus on the communication activities (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:241), authors such as Hallahan (2005:161) argue that (corporate) communication is an umbrella concept that includes all types of communication actions in organisations. According to this definition, public relations is then viewed as a part of corporate communication management.

In contrast with this definition, Steyn (2000c:24) argues for the use of the term *corporate communication* as this includes internal and external communication. She stated that some practitioners in South Africa refer to *public relations* as only the external function and, to limit confusion, the term *corporate communication* should be used. Later Steyn (2003b:169) also reverted to using the words *corporate communication* and *public relations* interchangeably, as the previous distinction between the two terms disappeared.

Grunig (1992a:4) and Van Ruler (1997:249) agree that the terms *public relations* and *communication management* can be used interchangeably as both are broader than *communication technique.* "Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organization's communication with both

external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals" (Grunig, 1992a:4).

For the purposes of this study, the words *corporate communication* and *public relations* will be used interchangeably, or in correlation with the source used.

1.8.2. Corporate Communication Practitioners

A single agreed upon definition of how a practitioner should be defined could not be found in public relations literature. Similarly, a single term to be used to label the practitioner has not been agreed on. However, the research of roles in South African public relations has placed practitioners into specific role categories, and they can therefore be described according to the tasks that they perform (see section 2.2.4.2.).

The public relations strategist practises public relations at the macro level and focuses on the boundary-spanning role. In this role, the practitioner analyses the environment and interprets this information for management – as an early warning system – and, in return, interprets the organisation's viewpoints for stakeholders to assist organisations to adapt to changes in their environment and therefore survive (De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:2; Moss *et al.*, 2000:301; Steyn, 2007:139, 141; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17, 19, 20; Warnaby & Moss, 1997:13). The strategist further focuses on actions such as, amongst others, relationship building with stakeholders, reputation-risk management, and is responsible for public relations strategy (Everett, 2006:101-102; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18).

In the role of manager in South African public relations, the practitioner gives input on the functional strategy by advising on consequences of behaviour; suggests communication messages; and formulates strategy and plans for messages to be communicated outside the organisation at the meso level (functional, departmental or divisional level) (Steyn, 2000c:31; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20). The public relations manager assists the organisation to explain itself to stakeholders. The relevant duties include, amongst others, developing and implementing public relations strategy (on the meso level); developing plans; managing; leading the public relations department; and educating management on their communication responsibilities and capabilities (Everett, 2006:102-103; Steyn, 2007:140-141).

The South African public relations technician' role, similar to those identified in other countries, is performed at the micro level and is used to express the organisation's strategy

and plans on an operational level to stakeholders. It includes producing communication products such as writing and editing communication publications, producing audiovisual messages, and creating graphics (Steyn, 2000c:26, 31; 2007:147; Steyn & Puth, 2000:21).

The author acknolweges that in the search of defining the role of the practitioner, various labels such as communication manager, communication management practitioner, communication management professional, and communication management consultant, are in some instances suggested. However, for the purposes of this study, the more generally accepted terms of *corporate communication practitioner* and *public relations practitioner* will be used interchangeably, or in correlation with the source used.

1.8.3. Stakeholders and Publics

In this study both the terms *stakeholders* and *publics* are used.

Stakeholders refer to internal and external groups to the organisation that are potentially influenced or can influence the organisation. However, as soon as (i) the relationship between stakeholders and the organisation are confronted with a challenge, and (ii) these stakeholders plan similar behaviours to deal with those problems, the *stakeholders* are referred to as *publics* (Jahansoozi, 2006:65; Steyn & Puth, 2000:199). According to the awareness and action taken by the publics on the challenge confronting their relationship with the organisation, they can be defined as *latent*, *aware* or *active* (Steyn & Puth, 2000:5). Both stakeholder and publics need to be taken into account by the organisation (Jahansoozi, 2006:65).

The terms will be used in accordance with the source used.

1.8.4. Dominant Coalition

The dominant coalition or sometimes also referred to as the decision-making coalition, can be defined as: "… the group with the power to make and enforce decisions about the direction of the organisation, its tasks, its objectives, and functions" (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600; ref. Plowman, 2005:132). It is argued that this group should consist of either the top management, board members or management team.

Although the foregoing definitions demarcate the central concepts in the study, the next section will discuss the delimitation of the study in more detail.

1.8.5. Organisational Performance

There are various aspects that can be considered when determining organisational performance. For the purposes of this study the following aspects will be considered in determining organisational performance: a benchmark organisational turnover of R100-million, whether the organisation can be considered a sector or market leader, the quality and size of the operation, economic growth, organisational growth, triple bottom line performance, the extent of innovation, the management and strategic contribution of the organisation, employment equity, and the organisation's export orientation (ref. TopCo, 2008).

The researcher did not have to conduct a study in order to identify organisations that adhere to the above criteria, as all the organisations that obtained places in the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168), are included in these lists based on meeting the abovementioned criteria (see section 4.3.4.1. for the details on sampling).

1.9. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study will focus on the contribution of corporate communication practitioners in the corporate sector of South Africa and variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance.

More specifically, the *first* delimitation affirms that this study focuses only on public relations in large, profitable organisations in South Africa. This is achieved by selecting the respondents from *South Africa's Top 300 National Company List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). No government-owned organisations and non-private sector organisations were included (see section 4.3.4.1.).

Moss *et al.* (2003:207) research in small and medium organisations in England proved that the practise of public relations in this context differs a great deal from that in larger organisations. Public relations in small and medium organisations is distinctly different from public relations in large organisations as the communication function is usually treated as part of the general management responsibilities of a small team and specific challenges

arise, including fire-fighting for survival and severely limited resources (Moss *et al.*, 2003: 198, 199, 208).

Although small and medium organisations have grown significantly and more research is needed on the use and practice of public relations in small and medium-sized organisations (Moss *et al.*, 2003:197-198), an understanding of how practitioners contribute to profitable, large organisations, is also of great value.

The *second* delimitation maintains that this study includes all the persons working with communication in the targeted organisations, and not only practitioners that are corporate communication association (professional body) members. The sample was specifically focused as such, as the opinions of people working in the trenches of communication on a daily basis – member of a professional association or not – needed to be established (see section 1.3.2.3. and 4.3.4.1.). The focus, however, remains on high-performing organisations.

The *third* delimitation asserts that the roles of practitioners as studied and empirically verified in more than one case in South Africa will be used in this study (Everett, 2006:1-167; Steyn, 2000c:20-43; 2003b:168-183). Hence the roles of strategist, manager and technician, as defined by Steyn (2000c:26, 30, 31) will be used in this study, although various other roles have been identified in Europe and the USA (Dozier & Broom, 1995:3-26; Moss, 2000:1-10; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-158; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:1-18; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:373-387). These roles will not be revisited and applied in this study as it has been proven to differ from the empirically verified South African public relations practitioner roles. The focus of the study is on the contribution of practitioners to organisational performance, which could differ per (South African) role performed.

A *fourth* delimitation of the study affirms that it is assumed that South African corporate communication practitioners can experience variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, which aligns with general literature on the topic, but that also may differ from literature, or include variables not found in previous literature. Therefore, the findings of the literature study were first tested with four respondents before continuing to compile and administer the questionnaires.

As stated, the delimitations of the study were considered in defining the research method.

1.10. RESEARCH METHOD

Table 1.2 summarises the research strategy, design, sampling and analysis used in the study.

Table 1.2: Research planning

General research question:	How can South African corporate communication practitioners enhance their contribution to organisational performance?	
Specific research questions	1. Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally? 2. What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance? 3. How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform? 4. How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature? 5. What is the relationship between the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa? 6. Which recommendations can be made to enhance the South African corporate communication practitioner's contribution to organisational performance?	
Research strategy	Exploratory Interpretive	
Research design	• Literature study	Specific research question one
	Methodological triangulation	
	• Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Specific research questions two, four and five
	• Quantitative: Questionnaire	Specific research questions two, three, four and five
	Using the knowledge gained from the above methods	Specific research question six
Population	South African corporate communication practitioners working in the top South African companies as per *South Africa's Top 300 Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168)	
Observation unit	Corporate communication practitioners	
Sampling	Qualitative: Purposeful sampling Quantitative: Cluster sampling which developed into a census	

Data analysis	Qualitative data: • Qualitative content analysis	Specific research questions two, four and five
	Quantitative data: • Statistics calculated by means of Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) data analysis software: o Descriptive statistics o Correlations and differentiations o Reliability calculations o Factor analysis	Specific research questions two, three and four
	• Structural equation modelling (by means of AMOS software (SPSS Inc., 2009))	Specific research question five
	• Using the knowledge gained from the above methods	Specific research question six

The research methodology is fully discussed in chapter four. However, a short summary will follow below.

1.10.1. Research Strategy

In this study, exploratory and interpretative research approaches were combined. The exploratory approach focused the study on exploring and explaining a phenomenon of which there is relatively little known within the South African public relations environment (Babbie, 2004:87, 89; Rubin *et al.*, 2005:206). The interpretative research approach assisted in contextualising the respondents' perceptions of the variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisations' performance (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326; Robson, 2002:195).

1.10.2. Research Design

In this study, methodological triangulation – using both qualitative and quantitative research methods – was applied (Robson, 2002:372). This method was used to increase reliability and validity in the study, as the shortcomings of the one method is compensated for by the other method. Furthermore, methodological triangulation enabled the researcher to study the complex research problem, allow for a greater diversity of views that one research method alone cannot offer, answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and allow for a more in-depth understanding of the research problem (Babbie, 2004:275; Decrop, 1999:158; Le Roux, 2005:300-317; Mangan *et al.*, 2004:569; Olsen, 2004:3; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003:14-15).

1.10.3. Literature Study

A literature study was used to examine existing literature on the variables influencing corporate communication practitioners globally in contributing to organisational performance.

The following databases were consulted to ascertain the availability of literature for the purpose of this research:

- Catalogue of books: Ferdinand Postma Library (North-West University)
- NRF: Nexus
- Emerald Online
- ScienceDirect
- Sabinet Online
- EbscoHost, which includes Academic Search Elite, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and Business Source Premier
- Research scripts from various universities were also studied.

A preliminary analysis indicated that ample material and literature are available to do research on this topic, although no similar study could be found in a South African context.

It was established that previous research on variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance were conducted in countries other than South Africa (Aldoory & Toth, 2002:103-126; Grunig, 1992c:1-666; Lauzen, 1991:245-255; O'Neil, 2003a:159-169, 2004:127-144; Sweep *et al.,* 1994:319-331; Wrigley, 2002:27-55).

A few applicable South African studies were also identified, although they did not address the same research questions as this study. Angelopulo (2000:3-17), a South African researcher, studied *Scalable Competency in the Communication Profession* by using practitioners from the USA and UK as respondents. Steyn (2000c:20-43) completed a unique South African study that focused on the expectations of the CEOs of corporate communication practitioners. Van Heerden (2004:1-287) followed with a study on the current state of corporate communication in Africa.

A few studies in general on the public relations landscape in South Africa were conducted and included: Petersen *et al.* (2002:1-29); Holtzhausen (2005:407-416); the *Corporate Communication Practices and Trends South African Benchmark Study 2007/2008* conducted by De Wet *et al.* (2008:1-31); and a study on the professionalisation of the function in South

Africa conducted by Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:224-229). These studies, however, did not provide answers as to the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

Only one exploratory study on the variables influencing the practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, which was limited to the banking industry in South Africa (Le Roux, 2004:1-54), was previously conducted.

The literature study was used to identify the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, and was followed by semi-structured interviews with four purposefully selected practitioners, as well as the chairpersons of the South African corporate communication professional bodies (PRISA and IABC). Lastly self-administered questionnaires to practitioners in top performing organisations followed.

1.10.4. Empirical Research

The empirical research phase of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

1.10.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four respondents and the chairpersons of the two professional bodies to explore the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa, in order to verify the variables identified in literature, and guide the questionnaire compilation for the quantitative data-collection phase. The literature findings were verified against the experiences of the practitioners in order to confirm the variables mentioned in literature, as well as to determine possible additional variables *not* mentioned in literature. The interviews thus provided information on aspects, such as for instance gender discrimination and stereotyping of the practitioner, that could not be directly observed, and from which the researcher needed to understand the interviewee's perception and feelings through the use of open-ended questions.

A purposeful sample of four senior practitioners, well-established, and with experience and standing in the profession who provided valuable information and represented both males and females, and black and white South African practitioners (a black woman, a black man and two white women) were selected (ref. Baxter & Babbie, 2004:325, 329). The chairpersons of each of the two professional bodies in South Africa (PRISA and the IABC)

were also interviewed. These respondents did not participate in the subsequent questionnaire survey.

The interviews followed the funnel method, starting with general questions and moving towards more specific questions. The researcher, however, deviated from the interview schedule as needed to uncover further meaning (Babbie, 2004:300; Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326; Robson, 2002:270, 272-273).

The researcher personally conducted the interviews and these were recorded and transcribed before being thematically analysed, by means of qualitative content analysis.

1.10.4.2. Questionnaires

The questionnaire focused on the variables influencing public relations practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. The relevant concepts and constructs were identified in global and local literature (see chapter three), as well as in the semi-structured interviews (see chapter five).

Pre-testing of the questionnaire took place by having the questionnaire reviewed by experts in the field and by asking a group of five corporate communication practitioners from the corporate communication department of the North-West University to complete the questionnaire. The greatest concern was the length of the questionnaire. However, the practitioners – once busy with the questionnaire – found it very interesting, and a worthwhile exercise, and completed the questionnaire without any objections.

The questionnaire data were coded and captured by the researcher and analysed with the assistance of the Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University. Both the programs Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) data analysis software were used to calculate descriptive statistics, as well as inferential statistics such as correlations, differentiations, reliability tests and factor analysis. To answer Specific research question five, structural equation modelling was conducted by using the software program AMOS (SPSS Inc., 2009).

The largest challenge in the data collection phase was to determine the population and drawing a sample for the study, as a list of public relations practitioners in South Africa is not available, other than the practitioners who belong to professional corporate communication bodies. These membership lists cannot be regarded as a suitable population for this study,

as the membership lists of the two professional bodies in South Africa (PRISA and the IABC) had the potential to exclude many practitioners from the research population (see sections 1.3.2.3.).

The population were therefore then defined as public relations professionals working in the top performing organisations in South Africa across all industries as listed on *South Africa's Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). All government-owned organisations, non-private sector organisations, and organisations that were duplicated on the aforementioned lists, were eliminated. This left a population of 1 319 organisations. Although multistage cluster sampling were initially used, eventually all 1 319 organisations were contacted in order to collect data from them in the ten months of October 2006 to July 2007. Therefore a census was conducted. A total of 262 usable questionnaires were obtained, which constitutes a response rate of 19.86%.

1.11. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapter outline for this study will be as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the problem and its setting
In the first chapter an orientation to the problem is provided, followed by a problem statement and the research questions. A brief overview of the main theoretical arguments, definition of terms, delimitation of the study, and research method are then provided.

Chapter 2: Conceptualisation of the study
The second chapter describes the paradigms, meta-theory, and theories used to conceptualise the study.

Chapter 3: Variables influencing corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance
This chapter provides the results of a literature study on the variables identified that could influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. The researcher explains how these influences are categorised into five levels of variables, and an associated list of concepts and constructs to be investigated are identified.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

The fourth chapter describes the research strategy and design followed. Specific attention is given to the empirical phase of the study that constitutes qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (questionnaire) research data generation and analysis.

Chapter 5: Discussion of semi-structured interview results

This chapter discusses the findings of the qualitative data gathered, by means of semi-structured interviews. The data are firstly discussed by respondent and then by theme.

Chapter 6: Discussion of quantitative data findings describing respondents

Chapter six reports on the quantitative data results pertaining to the respondents. This includes all data related to describe the answers of the respondents, and includes demographic data, data on career experience, their experience of the organisational environment, and the roles that the respondents currently perform.

Chapter 7: Discussion of quantitative data results on the perceptions of practitioners

This chapter discusses the quantitative data results of the perceptions of practitioners on the five levels of variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance.

Chapter 8: Advanced statistical analysis

Chapter eight specifically investigates the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance according to the corporate communication role they perform. The second part of the chapter aims to determine the relationship between the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. This is done by means of constructing a structural equation model of the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, by using the AMOS software (SPSS Inc., 2009) program.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and recommendations

In the last chapter the findings and conclusions pertaining to the Specific research questions are summarised and the General research question answered. Limitations of and the contribution of the study are explained, and recommendations for further research are made.

CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the background and an orientation to the problem of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance within the South African context, which resulted in the General research question. This was followed by a synopsis of the main theoretical arguments, definition of terms, the delimitations of the study, and the research methodology.

To start constructing a solution to the problem stated in chapter one, this chapter will provide the conceptual framework for the study. It will include a discussion of the paradigms, meta-theory and theories used (see table 2.1) to outline the study.

Table 2.1: Conceptualisation of the study

Paradigms	Relational paradigm	Reflective paradigm	Two-way symmetrical paradigm	Feminist paradigm
Domain	Corporate communication			
Meta-theory	General excellence theory			
Theories	Relationship management theory Corporate communication roles theory			

2.2. CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

Before the conceptual framework for the study is discussed, it is important to understand how the concepts *worldview*, *paradigm*, *meta-theory* and *theories* interrelate.

2.2.1. The Difference between Worldviews, Paradigms, Meta-theories and Theories

Authors differ on the use of the words *paradigm* and *worldview*. Some authors (for example Babbie, 2004:33; Grunig, 1989:24) refer to the concepts of *paradigm* and *worldview* interchangeably, while other authors disagree and clearly distinguish between the two concepts (ref. Steyn, 2004:57; 2004:57-58).

A *worldview* is the extra scientific (outside science) general, systematised set of assumptions, opinions, attitudes, beliefs and views held by any individual or group of people on the way in which the world or universe works (Steyn, 2004:57; 2004:57-58; *Webster Online Dictionary*, 2008; Kearney, in Grunig & White, 1992:33). It gives people a *picture of the whole* (Heylighen, 2000), forming their abstract macro thoughts of the world and how it works.

Grunig and White (1992:32) explain that people's *worldview*, for example, on human nature, ethics, gender and so forth, will influence their view of corporate communication. Leonard and Ströh (2000:35) agree with this statement, arguing that *public relations* implies a different meaning for different people, depending on the *worldview* that they hold. Therefore some people may disregard some theories on corporate communication or differ on the types of research questions asked within the discipline, as these do not lie within the scope of their *worldview* (Grunig & White, 1992:32, 36; Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:2). A person can, however, become aware of their personal *worldview* and then choose to select an alternative *worldview* (Grunig & White, 1992:55).

Within *worldviews*, *paradigms* can be found. A *paradigm* presents a scientific view that aims to organise and define a discipline (Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:7). The *paradigm* includes various *theories*, models and assumptions that guide the conceptualisation and research methods within a discipline (Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:6; Steyn, 2004:57-58; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:378).

A *worldview* is thus a larger umbrella that directs the researcher's understanding of the world, and the *paradigm* used – within the confines of the *worldview* umbrella – which directs the specific scientific research that the researcher attempts. The *paradigm*, in turn, consists of various *theories*, models and assumptions.

However, depending on the agreement, or alignment, of the *paradigms* used in a certain discipline, it is possible that a number of *paradigms*, which could even be contrasting, can be found in one discipline (Steyn, 2004:55). Consequently, researchers can ground their inquiries in various different *paradigms*. According to Steyn (2004:55), the social scientist can select any *paradigm* pertaining to the particular scenario under investigation. None is right or wrong, it is only more applicable for a specific situation (Steyn, 2004:55).

For instance, in public relations, Grunig (1989:30) identified four models of how public relations can be practiced, which he divided into two main *paradigms*. The *press-agentry, public information model* and the *two-way asymmetrical models* depict a scenario where the organisation maintains power and influences the stakeholders. The paradigm adhered to by these models are separate from the *two-way symmetrical paradigm* (Grunig, 1989:30). Only the *two-way symmetrical paradigm* depicts a power-sharing model, where the organisation and stakeholder become partners to find solutions (Grunig, 1989:30).

When doing research, it is important for the sake of validity that a researcher declares the *paradigm* in which the research is categorised, as this *paradigm* forms their framework for understanding the observations or findings of the study (Babbie, 2004:33). As Grunig and White (1992:34) stated "… philosophers of science now realise that scientists are human, that humans are subjective, and that subjectivity plays a role in theory building". By declaring the paradigm within which the researcher works, it will be made clear to readers why the theories that made sense to the researcher for the particular situation were used (Grunig, 1992a:6; Steyn, 2004:55).

Within each *paradigm* one will find one or many *meta-theories* which guide the thinking within the *paradigm*. The *meta-theory* encapsulates the models and *theories* within the *paradigm* by providing some fundamental assumptions about the discipline within the *paradigm* (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:7). A *meta-theory* thus organises the knowledge that people have about a specific topic by attaching values to those assumptions (Grunig, 1989:18; Hazleton & Botan, 1989:4).

Once again, a researcher's selection of a particular *theory* or a group of theories is influenced by their *worldview*, selected *paradigm* and *meta-theory*. Therefore the *meta-theory* should be understood as it "… can blind researchers to certain paths for understanding and learning" (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:4). Grunig (1989:17) argued that, to improve public relations success in solving practical problems, it is crucial to understand the *meta-theory* used.

Moving from the specific *meta-theory* used, the researcher will then select particular *theories* to provide a deeper understanding of the scenario under investigation (Babbie, 2004:33; Steyn, 2004:55). A *theory* consists of accepted knowledge (concepts and explanation), and/or assumptions, placed into a mental scheme with systematic rules or principles, within a specific discipline, which can explain phenomena (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:15; *Oxford Online Dictionary,* 2009*; Webster Online Dictionary*, 2008). There can be many *theories* found within a *meta-theoretical approach*. However, specific *theories* are selected on their applicability to the research problem (Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:4).

To provide an example of the interaction between *paradigms* and *theory*, the following example can be used:

A specific study within the feminist *paradigm* has shown that practitioners who practise feminist values (for example nurturing relationships) will fare better in their roles as public relations practitioners. However, a definition of what *good public relations* is, could specifically be defined for the study and could focus on nurturing relationships, thus implying that public relations is only successful when relationships are conducted in a nurturing fashion according to the researcher's selected *paradigm*. As support for this example, the excellence *theory* as *meta-theory* could be used, where symmetry and power sharing are central to the success of public relations.

This implies that being a practitioner who exhibits feminist values will only be considered advantageous in instances where *good corporate communication* is defined in the same way as the example study defined it.

Similarly, the foregoing also implies that the findings of this study will hold true only for the definition of what the *contribution of corporate communication is to organisational performance*, that is, in accordance with the *paradigms* used in this study. If someone else were to define the *contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance* from a different *worldview* of even *paradigm*, the findings of this study will not be applicable to that particular study.

The following figure provides a summary of the discussion:

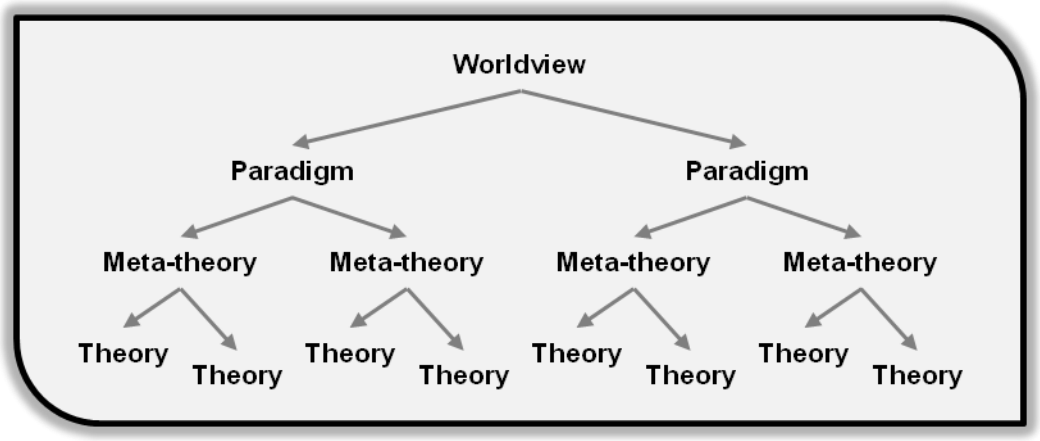


Figure 2.1: How worldviews, paradigms, meta-theories and theories fit together
(Author's own construction)

For the purposes of this study the researcher will state the *paradigm(s)*, *meta-theory* and *theories* used to determine the variables influencing the contribution of public relations practitioners to organisational performance.

2.2.2. Paradigms used in the Study

Paradigms pertaining to corporate communication can be country specific. In the USA the relational paradigm is typically followed in public relations studies, whilst the reflective paradigm is followed by most researchers in Europe (see section 1.2.1.1.; Steyn, 2004:64). There is, however, not a single, clear paradigm that is followed within South Africa. Steyn (2004:67-68) argued that a large number of practitioners in South Africa still practise the persuasive paradigm (leading to confusion between marketing and public relations), whilst others gravitate towards the two-way symmetrical paradigm.

In agreement with Steyn (2004:67-68), the researcher argues that South Africa still needs to develop a paradigm or combination of paradigms to be used in public relations that would accommodate diverse practitioners. This agreed framework can then guide the discipline and obtain a very broad context in which research can be done within the specific South African environment. Valin (2004) and Grunig (1989:18; 2006a) posit that a multi-dimensional paradigm would benefit the practitioner in being able to understand and accommodate the complex context in which s/he operates, which could be specifically useful in the complex South African environment.

In this study, *specifically to not limit research within a complex environment*, a combination of the following paradigms is used:

- the relational paradigm;
- the reflective paradigm;
- the two-way symmetrical paradigm; and
- the feminist paradigm.

In the following discussion, it will be shown that all of the abovementioned paradigms supplement each other, and does not have contradictory views on public relations. Furthermore, the main aspects of each of the paradigms pertaining to the study, will be highlighted.

2.2.2.1. Relational paradigm

Owing to the nature of how public relations are defined (see the definitions in section 1.8.1. and 1.8.2.) it is clear that public relations should focus on a paradigm that includes "... organisational-stakeholder relationships managed through two-way symmetrical communication" (Grunig, 2006b:3; Jahansoozi, 2006:62-63). "It is the management of these relationships – through both communication and behavioural initiatives – that is the appropriate framework for the study, teaching and practice of public relations" (Ledingham, 2003:195). Hon and Grunig (1999:2), Grunig *et al.* (2002:x), and Ledingham and Bruning (2000a:xiii) all agree that the purpose of public relations is to build and enhance long-term relationships with the key stakeholders of the organisation.

Van Ruler and Verčič (2002:6) posit in the Bled Manifesto that European public relations professionals do not distinguish between the concept *communication* and *relationships*, and use these words interchangeably (Verčič *et al.*, 2001:379). These findings coincide with the view of Phillips (2006b:212) that the relational paradigm is accepted in public relations literature, and the statement of Bruning and Ledingham (1999:157) that academics are gravitating towards an acceptance that public relations must be viewed as "… the management of a relationship between organizations and publics", where the interests of both parties are balanced (Ledingham, 2003:181).

In 1999, Ledingham and Bruning (in Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160) defined a relationship as: "… the state which exists between an organisation and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and or cultural well-being of the other entity."

However, Broom *et al.* (2000:6, 18) argued that in 2000 there was still not a clear definition of relationships as used in public relations, as it was a complex term, and therefore suggested the following definition of organisation-stakeholder relationships:

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

These authors (Broom *et al.*, 2000:15) also added that the "... the exchange of information or resources ..." can define the concept of relationship. Through the exchange of information both the organisation and stakeholders should be able to express their identity and grow by negotiating an understanding of the world (Carl & Duck, 2004:5).

It is the view of the researcher that, for ease of use, the definition and assumptions regarding organisational-stakeholder relationships should be separated. A suggested definition almalgamated from the various definitions (from Broom *et al.*, 2000:6, 18; Grunig, 2006b:3; Ledingham & Burning, in Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160) for organisational-stakeholder relationships could read as follows:

> *An organisational-stakeholder relationship is a state which exists between an organisation and its key stakeholders through striving for two-way symmetrical communication, which aims to create a mutually beneficial state for both parties.*

The following assumptions forms part of the relational paradigm and are subsequently relevant to this study:

- Organisational stakeholder relationships form when the actions of one party have consequences for the other (Hon & Grunig, 1999:12).
- *Two-way symmetrical communication* is needed to create, build and maintain organisation and stakeholder relationships and manage perceptions and expectations to build *mutually beneficial relationships* (Broom *et al.*, 2000:17; Grunig, 2006b:3). The continuation of the relationship is based on the degree to which expectations are met (Ledingham, 2003:195). The relational paradigm thus moves public relations away from the manipulation of stakeholders to the more ethical two-way symmetrical communication method of building, nurturing, and maintaining organisation-public

relationships and managing organisational behaviour (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:158; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 11; Steyn, 2003a:15). Furthermore, the communication and frequent interaction (communication and behaviour) between organisations and stakeholders are crucial as this is needed for them to develop their specific understanding of the world and an understanding of the other's viewpoints (Carl & Duck, 2004:7, 21, 28; Ledingham, 2003:195). Carl and Duck (2004:16) even posit that daily communication in a relationship "… are missed when they [sic] do not occur". Bruning *et al.* (2008:29) argued that relationships are built through communication and only *specific* communication tailored to the *specific* relationship is best. This also implies that stakeholder communication must be transparent, which will increase trust (Jahansoozi, 2006:80, 83).

- Both the organisation and stakeholders must be *willing to engage in dialogue* and strive towards two-way symmetrical communication (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160). Hon and Grunig (1999:14-15) added that over and above being willing to engage in dialogue, parties also need access to one another, need to be positive towards one another, and be open about their thoughts and feelings to build realtionships with stakeholders.
- The *relationships are separate* from the organisation or stakeholder entities. The relationships are not the entities.
- The nature of a relationship implies that there will be an *interdependence* between the parties involved, similar to the view suggested by the systems paradigm (Broom *et al.*, 2000:15). Furthermore, there are assumptions and expectations (to expect something or *not* to expect anything) from both parties (Ledingham, 2003:195). The organisation must be aware and recognise its influence on the lives of stakeholders and the fact that those stakeholders can once again affect the organisation (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:159). This awareness will then drive the organisations to engage in dialogue with the stakeholders to facilitate a relationship between the stakeholders and organisation (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160). Therefore:
    - Relationships between the organisation and stakeholders will *determine the futures both parties*. Since relationships occur when parties need resources from each other, or perceive mutual threats, or there is a legal or voluntary necessity to associate (Broom *et al.*, 2000:17), the relationship can assist both parties to co-exist and prosper. Public relations should thus service both the organisation and public (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11). However, the history of how the relationship has grown and previous actions also impact on the engagement of the parties with each other (Ledingham, 2003:195).

  - Organisations have an *ethical responsibility* to build and maintain relationships. This view on *ethical responsibility* coincides with the reflective paradigm where the organisation has an inherent responsibility to society, as discussed in section 2.2.2.2. (Verčič *et al.*, 2001:382).
- The relationship between the parties must be actively *managed* (Ledingham, 2003:195). In this sense management does not imply a position of control, but rather a position where two-way symmetrical communication is actively applied to the relationship to resolve problems and create win-win solutions (Hon & Grunig, 1999:14-15).

The importance of stakeholder *relationships* in public relations is that it provides a means of accountability for public relations practitioners (Ledingham, 2001:293) and benefits for both the organisation and public (Ledingham, 2003:182). The relationship paradigm therefore contributes to public relations as a function to achieve recognition as a valuable and integral part of organisations (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xvi). Grunig *et al.* (2002:11) argues that the quality of relationships is public relations' contribution to the organisation.

This view of the organisational-stakeholder relationships thus imply that the public relations function should be feeding information from stakeholders into the organisation and from the organisation back to the stakeholders. According to Steyn (2007:139) this contribution of public relations to strategic decision-making, ensures the functions' management and strategic status. Public relations become more than a technical function, as not only their output is measured but also the outcome – relationship quality (Grunig & Haung, 2000:26). Public relations thus contribute to organisational effectiveness and performance, by creating and maintaining relationships (Grunig & Haung, 2000:30).

2.2.2.2. Reflective paradigm

The reflective paradigm can be viewed as a broadening of the relational paradigm (Steyn, 2004:73) or even encompassing the relational paradigm (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:16). This paradigm is mostly supported in Europe (Steyn, 2004:73).

The reflective paradigm states that the behaviour of the organisation (including communication behaviour) will impact on society in general. In turn, the long-term survival of the organisation depends on the legitimating of the organisation by the same society (Steyn, 2003a:16, 17; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257). By implication, organisations should therefore act responsibly and has a role to play in the development of the society within

which it exists (Steyn, 2003a:16, 17; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257, 263). The reflective paradigm emphasises the organisation's social responsibility (Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:139) and society's need for social responsibility as a way of securing its own future (Holmström, 2002:2).

Where the relational paradigm focuses on the relationship building and maintaining responsibilities of the public relations function, the reflective paradigm focuses on the public relations function's responsibilities to understand and convey to the organisation, stakeholder's and society's perspectives, values and views in order for the organisation to act responsibly. Practitioners within the public relations function should thus "… analyse changing standards and values and standpoints in society and discuss these with members of the organisation, in order to adjust the standards and values or standpoints of the organisation accordingly" (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14).

By forming the social consciousness of the organisation (Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:139), the public relations function is responsible mostly for listening (reflective) tasks, but also for communicating (expressive or window) tasks with the aim of creating mutual understanding between the organisation and society, for the organisation to earn a license to operate (Steyn, 2003a:23-24).

In the listening or reflective task (or the mirror function as applied by Steyn (2003a:23) to the South African environment), the organisation mirrors itself in society. The organisation thus tries to view itself from the viewpoints of its stakeholders or society (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:261) while keeping its societal responsibilities in mind. In the communicating or expressive task (or window function as applied by Steyn (2003a:23) to the South African environment), the organisation expresses itself transparently to society, based on the information gathered through the listening phase (Steyn, 2003a:23-24). Public relations is thus concerned with the macro level (strategic level) of the functioning of the organisation (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:263).

This approach is similar to the metaphor of the *thinking heart* of L A Grunig (2008:121). She argues that public relations practitioners are most effective when using their *hearts* to hear and understand the stakeholders; and their analytical or *thinking* abilities to integrate this with the viewpoints of the organisation. The knowledge of the *heart* is associated with ethics, values and behavioural choices, whilst the *mind* is pragmatic. The strength of the practitioner thus lies in the combined use of his or her head and the heart. Grunig (2008:122) states that "Neither by itself – heart nor head – is sufficient to the critical task of establishing and

nurturing relationships with stakeholders". The focus is therefore once again on the responsibility to conduct public relations in an ethical and socially responsible fashion.

The reflective paradigm is important for this study as it places emphasis on the societal responsibilities and social consciousness of the organisation, as well as on the reflective tasks of the practitioner on the strategic level (see section 2.2.4.2.1.), which will allow the practitioner to add more to organisational performance.

2.2.2.3. Two-way symmetrical communication paradigm

The asymmetrical models of public relations tried, in essence, to change stakeholders' behaviour through persuasion. These models included the *press-agentry* or *publicity model*, the *public information model* and the *two-way asymmetrical model*.

The first two models mentioned, used one-way communication to send propagandistic messages to the stakeholders to change their views of the organisation. Specifically in the *press-agenty* model, the truth was not highly regarded in the organisation's efforts to control its environment (Grunig, 2001:15). Sadly, according to Grunig *et al.* (2001:188) it remains the most frequently practised approach to public relations.

The *public information model* then developed from the previous model, but held on to the belief that the environment should be controlled. In this model the emphasis shifted to sending information to stakeholders. Therefore, although information was given to stakeholders, they started mistrusting organisations and questioning their messages, as the truth was seen as that which the organisation considered to be the truth (Grunig, 2001:15-16).

The *two-way asymmetrical model* proved to be more sophisticated than the previous two models, by using research to develop messages "… that are most likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organization wants" (Grunig, 1992a:18). None of these models, however, solved the challenges faced in the public relations discipline (Steyn 2003a:8). Therefore the search for a new paradigm was started.

The *two-way symmetrical paradigm* was conceptualised after analysing the findings of the Excellence Study. The Excellence Study was commissioned and funded by the IABC in 1985. This extensive study was conducted under the leadership of the project director – Prof. J E Grunig – and a team of researchers included individuals from organisations in Canada,

USA and the United Kingdom; senior communication officers; CEOs; and employees (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:ix; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:ix, x, 3). The findings of the study have been reported in various publications, including the three *excellence books*:

1. *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (Grunig, 1992c:1-666);
2. *[The] Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management* (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:1-272); and
3. *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: a study of communication management in three countries* (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1-653).

Various reports and papers were also produced based on this research and, in further progress, the study has been replicated in other countries such as Slovenia (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xiii) and South Africa (Steyn, 2005a:797).

In the two-way symmetrical communication paradigm all parties involved try to create understanding and build and maintain long-term mutually beneficial relationships with other parties through transparent and ethical communication (Grunig, 1989:38, 40; 2001:14; Grunig & White, 1992:42-43). The focus of this paradigm is thus on the *method – communication* – used in attempting to build and maintain stakeholder relationships.

Mainly compromise and negotiation must be used to build long-term relationships with stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11).

> *An organization that uses the two-way symmetrical model, … uses research and dialogue to manage conflict, improve understanding, and build relationships with publics. With the symmetrical model, both the organization and publics can be persuaded; both also may change their behaviour.*
>
> (Grunig & White, 1992:39)

This implies that the organisation (management) must be willing to relinquish some power to stakeholders and accept that stakeholders can influence the future of their organisation. It is suggested, however, that organisations can maximise their autonomy by giving up some of their control to build relationships with their publics (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:10; Grunig & White, 1992:39). The two-way symmetrical paradigm allow practitioners to practise public relations ethically (Grunig & White, 1992:57; Moncur, 2006:96), as the two-way symmetrical paradigm assist them to show their concern for others and themselves (Grunig, 2006b:3).

According to Grunig (1989:17) organisations that adhere to the two-way symmetrical communication paradigm also adhere to the following presuppositions in their culture, which in turn supports the general excellence theory (see section 2.2.3.2.):

- Organisations are *interdependent* on their environment and are in constant movement to achieve *equilibrium* within this environment. This implies that both the organisation and stakeholder can benefit in a relationship, rather than having a relationship where only one will benefit or survive (Grunig & White, 1992:42-43).
- Moving equilibrium is achieved by organisations acting as open systems that *exchange information freely* with other systems.
- People should have the opportunity to add value to the organisation (*equity*) and be *innovative*, and should have the ability and willingness to influence and change their own behaviour (*autonomy*).
- Management must be *decentralised* and allow stakeholder groups the freedom to argue for their best interest against the government or organisation (*interest-group liberalism*).
- People and the organisation must take *responsibility* for their influence on others and use negotiation, compromise and communication to *resolve any conflict*.

Although Grunig (1989:40) argued that the two-way symmetrical paradigm is effective in practice, many authors, whilst acknowledging the effectiveness and ethics of the paradigm, critiqued it as an unrealistic achievement (Grunig & White, 1992:45-46; Valin, 2004). This led to the development of the mixed-motive model *within* the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Grunig & White, 1992:48).

The mixed-motive model is the practical application of the two-way symmetrical paradigm, as the orientation is still to have open, or transparent two-way symmetrical communication even when practising incidences of asymmetrical communication, such as persuasion (Grunig & White, 1992:48). In this model research is used to "… help bring about symbiotic changes in the attitudes and behaviors of both the publics in the organization" (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:188). According to the mixed-motive model, there is a win-win zone in which the organisation and stakeholders can persuade and influence one another to find common ground, specifically useful when the organisation and its stakeholders have conflicting interests (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:356). The practitioner is thus still loyal to both the organisation and the stakeholders when applying this model within the two-way symmetrical paradigm (ref. Grunig & White, 1992:46). As Grunig and White (1992:48) stated: "The concept of reciprocity – including both selfish reciprocity and the generalized norm when there are differences in power – allows us to accommodate mixed motives into the symmetrical worldview".

The practitioner can thus, when not communicating symmetrically, persuade and influence from both the sides of the stakeholder and the organisation– once again creating symmetry (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11) and act as a bridge (not a buffer) between the organisation and stakeholders, which give stakeholders a voice in strategic organisational decisions (Grunig, 2006b:5).

The main contribution of this paradigm to public relations is that it defines public relations in terms of *organisational behaviour* – which includes organisational communication behaviour (Sharpe, 2000:348). The two-way symmetrical paradigm thus describes the *type of communication* the public relations practitioner should use to build and maintain stakeholder relations, in order to contribute to organisational performance.

2.2.2.4. Feminist paradigm

The feminist paradigm offers much more insight into public relations than just highlighting gender differences (Hurley, 1999:54; ref. Aldoory, 2005:668; Grunig *et al.*, 2000:52). This paradigm highlights the feminine characteristics that benefit public relations, such as a relational orientation (nurturing relationships); facilitating another's development (empowerment); focussing on social responsibility; and valuing diversity. It also emphasises required characteristics such as equality, equity, ethics, fairness, forgiveness, integrity, loyalty, morality, perfection, tolerance, and focuses on quality of life (Grunig *et al.*, 2000:58). As a result, practitioners practising public relations from a feminine perspective usually tend to practise the ethical and effective two-way symmetrical method of communication (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Grunig & White, 1992:50; Hon *et al.,* 1992:429; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:142, 143), which concure with the relational and reflective paradigms. Practitioners, be they male or female, practising public relations from a feminine paradigm thus move toward findings of the Excellence Study in producing corporate communication that is excellent and in doing so, contribute to organisational performance (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Grunig & White, 1992:50; Hon *et al.,* 1992:429).

In contrast, practitioners that practise public relations with purely masculine traits – such as efficiency, rationality, individualism and competitiveness, and having only their own interest at heart – will be practising unethical public relations, which is removed from the two-way symmetrical and the feminist paradigms (Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:142).

As explained, the feminist paradigm has implications for the practice of the public relations function, as well as the research conducted within this discipline. The influence of the paradigm on research is threefold:

First, the feminist paradigm shows that the main values and beliefs used in public relations have been conceptualised and implemented by people representing a small portion of society (Babbie, 2004:40). Research in public relations was mostly conducted by white males, and later included white females, which cannot account for the views of other minority groups. With the growth of public relations knowledge and the applications thereof in different countries (ref. Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003c:1-601; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2004:1-12), this situation is starting to rectify itself.

Second, feminist research tends to focus on the personal values attributed to women, and then the resulting structural inequalities in public relations, which includes aspects such as salary discrepancies and the glass-ceiling phenomenon (Yeomans, 2007:213). Yeomans (2007:213) argues that more research is needed to examine the "…learned (or socially constructed) nature of gender and the pressure placed upon both men and women in meeting gender role expectations in public relations". The liberal feminist theory also offers some individual strategies for overcoming discrimination in the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:321).

The more radical feminist theorists call for total institutional and societal transformation to accommodate people against whom there is discrimination (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:321). However, both the liberal and radical views are necessary to critically evaluate discrimination. The liberal strategies can be applied immediately, while the radical strategies will need to be effected over time.

Third, the importance of emotion or actions of the *heart* is becoming more important in public relations. Yeomans (2007:213) argues that emotion management is crucial for effective public relations, and Grunig (2008:121) proposes the *thinking heart* to bring the emotional side of public relations to the fore. Previously, only the masculine actions of logic and analysis were expected in business (Grunig, 2008:122), and the feminine traits of emotion were not *allowed* in business. It is now starting to come to light that by applying feminine, and hence emotional traits, public relations can contribute more to organisational performance.
Especially in this study where the contribution of public relations to the organisation and aspects such as stereotyping, discrimination and the like are included, the feminist paradigm

influences the researcher to *not* view all the data from one perspective. The researcher should try to understand the viewpoints of the minority groups and reveal this in the study.

2.2.3. Meta-theory used in the Study

To discuss the theories used in this study, one should first understand the way in which the theories were used by the researcher.

2.2.3.1. Inductive versus deductive reasoning

When planning research it is important to note whether inductive or deductive reasoning is used as it determines the nature of the study, as well as the use of theories in the study.

Deductive reasoning moves from the general to the particular. It is seen as theory testing (Botan, 1989:102). Specific guidelines or hypotheses or predictions are developed from the logic of general theoretical principles and then tested to obtain specific answers applicable to the situation studied (Babbie, 2004:25, Botan, 1989:102).

Inductive reasoning in turn, moves from the particular to the general where general principles are developed from specific observations. This implies that one studies a sample (specific incidences of a particular phenomenon) to discover a pattern and create order out of all the observations (theory creation) (Babbie, 2004:25, Botan, 1989:101-102). This method, however, does not offer an explanation for the existence of the pattern (Babbie, 2004:25). The inductive and deductive methods are complementary halves of theory development (Botan, 1989:102-103).

For the purposes of this study deductive and inductive reasoning is seen as a circular movement, where the one leads to the other (see figure 2.2).

Deductive reasoning will assist the researcher in examining the applicable theories to obtain certain specifications or guidelines as to how practitioners can contribute to organisational performance. Since there are many theories and previous research available on this topic, this knowledge will be used to identify factors affecting practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, which will then be tested within the specified sample to obtain and test patterns identified in previous research (ref. Babbie, 2004:52).

Together with deductive reasoning, the researcher will also apply inductive reasoning by using qualitative research to allow the study to dictate aspects or patterns not included in the theories applied to the study.

Deductive and inductive reasoning as a circular movement then implies that the theory is used as a guideline and a framework in this study, but not as the boundaries within which results should fit. The theories alone will thus not direct the research, but as Babbie (2004:25) states, the two methods frequently "… work together to provide ever more powerful and complete understandings …" of the particular scenario under investigation.

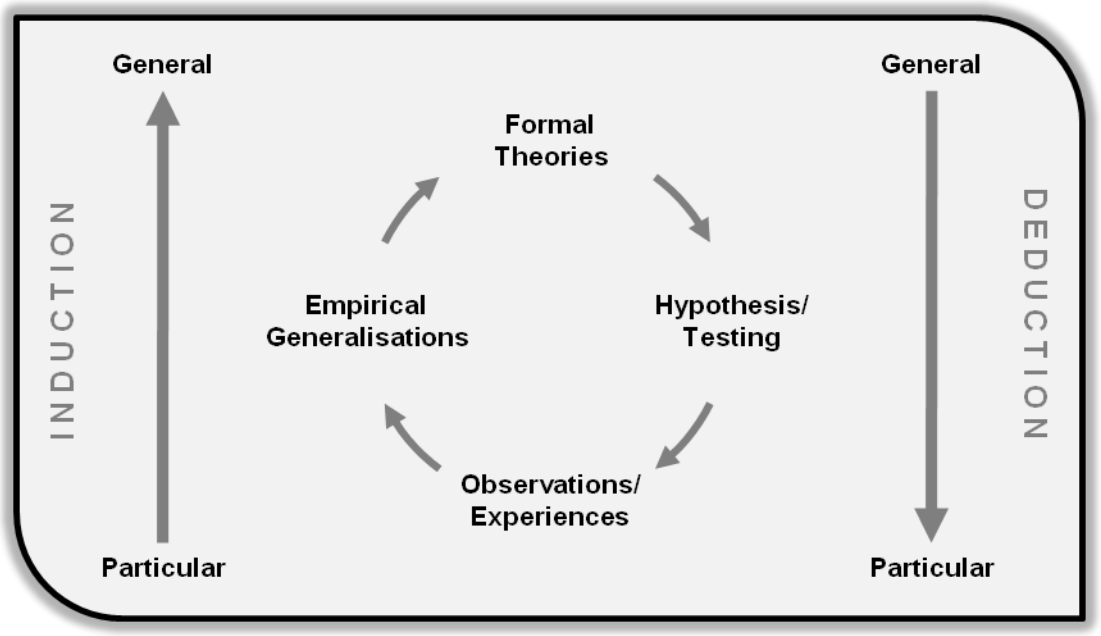


Figure 2.2: Inductive vs deductive reasoning
(adapted from Babbie, 2004:26; Botan, 1989:103)

2.2.3.2. General excellence theory as meta-theory

The general excellence theory limit conceptual confusion as it supplies the rules and assumptions, which underlie this study's perspective of public relations (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:7; Littlejohn, 2002:26; Onions, 2006:4; Overton, 2003:13). The theory normatively describes the characteristics of the practitioner and the organisational culture in which the public relations practitioner will be able to practice excellent public relations, and thereby contribute to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992:16-17, 28; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:543-546; Grunig & White, 1992:38). Since the general excellence theory provides fundamental

assumptions about the discipline, it is considered a meta-theory (ref. Hazleton & Botan, 1989:7).

The general excellence theory in public relations is derived from the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Meintjies & Steyn, 2006:157). However, the relational, reflective and feminist paradigms all also support the general excellence theory.

The general excellence theory has at its core the *effectiveness* and *excellence* questions (Steyn, 2000b:9): "What is an effective organisation?" and "Why and how do public relations contribute to organisational effectiveness and to what extent?" (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2002:10). In their attempt to then answer these questions through the Excellence Study (as described above in section 2.2.2.3.), Grunig *et al.* (2002:10) developed and tested the excellence meta-theory (or general excellence theory) in various countries.

The central argument of the excellence meta-theory includes that public relations must be viewed and critically analysed from an idealistic, two-way symmetrical worldview, and be regarded as managerial (Grunig & White, 1992:38, 54). The goals of the function would be to provide the organisation with the expertise to respond to the environment and adapt accordingly (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1). When this idealistic and normative theory is the focus of the public relations function, it will produce excellent public relations, which will contribute to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; 1992b:531; Grunig & White, 1992:61).

The public relations function should thus develop mutual understanding between the organisation and stakeholders and give stakeholders a voice in management decisions that affect them (Grunig, 2001:16), similar to what was outlined in the relational paradigm (see section 2.2.2.1.). Furthermore, public relations should be socially responsible by serving the public interest and contributing to informed debates of issues in society as discussed in the reflective and feminist paradigms. As Grunig *et al.* (2002:xii) stated, "… the excellence theory shows that public relations is an important function in society".

The excellence meta-theory describes in more detail the ideal environment and organisational culture in which public relations should be practised to deliver excellent corporate communication that contributes to organisational performance. In this vain, twelve characteristics, identified by Grunig (1992a:16-17) and supported by Grunig and White (1992:38, 55), includes:

- On a human resources level, the empowerment of people by giving employees autonomy to make decisions, paying attention to personal growth and quality of work life, balance between teamwork and individual efforts, are important.
- An organic structure, which eliminates bureaucratic and hierarchical organisational structures, is needed. Decision-making should be decentralised, and leadership be used to create collaboration and integrate various cultures into the organisation. The theory also suggests that various influences, such as organisational structure and culture, as well as the communication strategy adhered to by management, could influence the contribution by corporate communication to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26).
- Entrepreneurship, which encompasses an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit, cultivates human resources and grows organic structures, is needed.
- Symmetrical communication systems are needed to ensure that the organisation stays in touch with strategic stakeholders such as employees.
- Leaders should rely on networking and *management-by-walking-around* rather than by authoritarian systems. Leaders should also provide a vision and direction and create order for employees and other stakeholders.
- Strong, participative cultures (democracy), where employees share a sense of mission and are integrated through culture, is needed.
- Organisations need to maximise the bottom line through strategic planning. This includes identifying the most important opportunities and constraints in their environment.
- Management must embrace social responsibility, as suggested in the reflective paradigm.
- Organisations should value diversity and support women and minorities.
- Quality should be a priority in all actions, decisions or resource allocation.
- Operational systems should be developed so as to be able to implement foregoing actions.
- A collaborative, societal culture where collaboration, participation, trust and mutual responsibility are important, should be encouraged.

Specifically then, pertaining to the public relations function, Grunig (2006a) argued that the following generic principles of the organisation's view of public relations, as proven across various countries, must be in place for public relations to contribute to organisational performance:

- For for public relations to be excellent, it has to be practised as a separate management function, as its two-way symmetrical nature differentiates it from other functions in the organisation. Public relations can thus help organisations to interact with their environment and could deliver more than mere technical tasks (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; Grunig & White, 1992:38).
- Public relations therefore serves both a strategic and technical role. Public relations make its biggest contribution to specifically the strategic role, where public relations participates in and contributes to strategic decision-making by bringing stakeholder information into the organisation (Grunig, 2001:9).
- Public relations are ethical and advocate social responsibility.
- Public relations departments must have a professional knowledge base.
- Public relations must be supported and empowered by the dominant coalition.
- Public relations departments must strategically plan, implement and evaluate plans.
- Public relations need to integrate organisation-wide communication and help shape the organisational culture and environment (underlying conditions) of organisational performance.
- The value of public relations must be determined by measuring the quality of relationships with stakeholders.

Grunig (1992a:28) summarises the characteristics of excellent public relations programmes on four levels, namely programme, departmental, organisational and effects of excellent public relations. In the text of Dozier *et al.* (1995:1-272), titled *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management*, which is aimed at practitioners, the communication-excellence characteristics are divided into three spheres (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:7). The centre sphere is the knowledge of the practitioner; the middle sphere the shared expectations between management and the practitioner; and the third sphere the participative culture of the organisation in which the practitioner works (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:10).

These characteristics do not differ from one another, but support one another to provide a complete picture of excellent public relations, that contribute to organisational performance.

Table 2.2. shows how the excellence characteristics suggested by Grunig (1992a:28) and those suggested by Dozier *et al.* (1995:7) match each other.

The most important contribution of these characteristics are that they describe what the practitioner should do and know; how the public relations department should be structured; the organisational environment that is ideal for public relations; as well as the contribution of excellent public relations to the performance of the organisation.

Another contribution by the excellence meta-theory is that it distinguishes between corporate communication and marketing. Marketing essentially uses communication to persuade, and public relations, when adhering to the excellence principles, communicate symmetrically to move toward building mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders.

The specific theories used in the study will now be discussed.

Table 2.2: Matching of the excellence characteristics suggested by Grunig (1992a:28) and by Dozier *et al.* (1995:7)

Levels of characteristics of excellence public relations programmes by Grunig (1992a:28)		The communication-excellence characteristics based on the three spheres of communication excellence by Dozier *et al.* (1995:7)	
Levels	**Characteristics**	**Three Spheres**	**Characteristics**
Programme level	Managed strategically	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Dominant coalition's support of communication
			Value that the dominant coalition places on communication
			Contributions of the communication department to strategic planning
Departmental level	A single or integrated public relations department	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Value that the dominant coalition places on communication
	Separate function from marketing		Dominant coalition's support of communication
	Direct reporting relationship to senior management		
	Two-way symmetrical model		
	Senior public relations person in the managerial role	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Top communicator enacts the managerial role
			Top communicator enacts senior adviser role
			Demand for communication-manager role from dominant coalition
			Demand for senior adviser role from dominant coalition
	Potential for excellent public relations as indicated by: Knowledge of symmetrical model	Knowledge base of communication department	Knowledge to use the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical model
	Knowledge of managerial role	Knowledge base of communication department	Knowledge to perform the communication-manager role
	Academic training in public relations	Knowledge base of communication department	Knowledge to use the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical model
	Professionalism		Knowledge to perform the communication-manager role
	Equal opportunities for men and women in public relations	Organisational culture	Support for female employees in the organisation

Levels of characteristics of excellence public relations programmes by Grunig (1992a:28)		The communication-excellence characteristics based on the three spheres of communication excellence by Dozier *et al.* (1995:7)	
Levels	**Characteristics**	**Three Spheres**	**Characteristics**
Organisational-level	Worldview for public relations in the organisation reflect the two-way symmetrical model	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Perceived demand for two-way symmetrical practices
			Perceived demand for two-way asymmetrical practices
			Demand for two-way asymmetrical practices from dominant coalition
			Demand for two-way symmetrical practices from dominant coalition
	Public relations director has power in or with the dominant coalition	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Value that the dominant coalition places on communication
			Dominant coalition's support of communication
			Contributions of the communication department to strategic planning
	Participative rather than authoritarian organisational culture	Organisational culture	Participative culture
	Symmetrical system of internal communication		
	Organic rather than mechanical organisational structure		
	Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Importance of informed communication with external groups

Levels of characteristics of excellence public relations programmes by Grunig (1992a:28)		The communication-excellence characteristics based on the three spheres of communication excellence by Dozier *et al.* (1995:7)	
Levels	**Characteristics**	**Three Spheres**	**Characteristics**
Effects of excellent public relations	Programmes meet communication objectives	Shared expectations about communication with senior management	Importance of informed communication with external groups
		Organisational culture	Participative culture
	Reduces costs of regulation, pressure and litigation	Sections of all the above	Sections of all the above
	Job satisfaction is high among employees		

Source: Author's own construction

2.2.4. Theories

Theories are used *within* the paradigms and meta-theory suggested by the researcher, and seek to provide logical explanations to phenomena (Babbie, 2004:33). The theories therefore provide "… specific conclusions about the relationship among concepts …" for the specific scenario under investigation (Babbie, 2004:43, 44). One can thus use both the paradigm and theory of a discipline, for example feminism, in one study, although using both is not a prerequisite.

The theories assisted in the deductive reasoning within the study. The relationship management theory and corporate communication roles theory were used in this study.

2.2.4.1. Relationship management theory

As stated in the relational paradigm (see section 2.2.2.1.), the outcomes of an organisation's behaviours, including communicative actions, forms the relationship between the organisation and stakeholder. Relationships are seen as the *common denominator* for the public relations profession (Valin, 2004) and are "… the key to effective public relations" (Grunig, 2006b:6), and "… the key to unlocking all other corporate value" (Phillips, 2006a:36-37). The relationship management theory applies the relational paradigm to the practice.

The relationship management theory provides public relations with a method to show its contribution to organisational performance (Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9). Grunig (2001:13) labelled this the Relationship Principle – where, during times of crisis or issues management – the importance of the relationship is shown. Public relations creates wealth for the organisation by managing and aligning relationships throughout the organisation (Phillips, 2006a:40). By managing the quality of long-term relationships with internal and external stakeholders, it allows the organisation the freedom to achieve its mission, reduces the costs of regulation, legislation and litigation, reduces the risk of implementing decisions (as more knowledge on the possible ramifications is available), limits negative publicity, and sometimes increases revenue and provides the organisation with a competitive advantage (Grunig, 2006b:3, 6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 10, 11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:32; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9,11; Phillips, 2006a:34, 35; 2006b:212). Public relations thus benefits the organisation financially and non-financially (Grunig, 2006b:3) by knowing "… how to deal with people" (Davis, 2004:188-189), and limiting alienation, which can be costly to the organisation (Sharpe, 2000:357).

Phillips (2006a:36), in agreement with what is stated by Gregory (2008) and Kim (2001b:22), argue that, although not currently listed on the balance sheet, stakeholder relationships need to be viewed as intangible assets that can create wealth for the organisation. However, for the value and status of public relations as a management function to be established in management science literature, some form of measurement of those relationships created are required (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:158; Ledingham & Bruning, in Steyn, 2003a:15). Grunig (2002:1) agreed that relationship health has to be tested to demonstrate the value of the public relations function to the organisation. However, *measuring relationships* is a broad concept and, by loosely referring to the measurement of the health of the organisation-stakeholder relationships, the field of public relations will limit its effectiveness (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:165).

To move toward the reliable measurement of relationships, Bruning and Ledingham (1999:164-165) categorised relationships into professional (financial, business relationships), personal (trust relationships), and community relationships (supporting social responsibility). Ledingham and Bruning (1998:61) furthermore isolated the following aspects as determinants of relationships: trust, involvement, investment, commitment, and open communication. In spite of this, Bruning *et al.* (2008:29) argue that mutual benefit is the most important aspect of relationships as it influences the behavioural outcome for publics and organisations. Although the different goals of relationships are important to identify, more detailed measurable was needed to measure relationship health or relationship quality.

All the foregoing aspects were accrued into the measurable relationship determinants offered by Hon and Grunig (1999:1-40). The authors identified two types of relationships and four relationship outcomes through which organisational-stakeholder relationships could be tested. These indicators have been shown to indicate a true reflection of relationship health.

The two types of relationship identified were (Hon & Grunig, 1999:3):

- Exchange relationships, where parties expect something in return from one another. The interaction therefore needs to be rewarded with something. For instance in the case of a relationship with suppliers, suppliers would expect the organisation to purchase from them.
- Communal relationships, where parties are genuinely concerned about one another's wellbeing and therefore provide benefits to one another, regardless of receiving something in return. For example the relationship with employees or communities should be more communal.

It can be argued that the two types of relationships are opposites on a continuum of relationship expectations. Grunig (2002:2) stated that "… a measure of the degree to which a public believes that it has a communal relationship with an organization is perhaps the purest indicator of the success of the public relations management function".

The four relationship outcomes or indicators of organisational-stakeholder relationships are as follows (Grunig, 2002:2; Grunig & Haung, 2000:43-47; Hon & Grunig, 1999:3):

- Control mutuality indicates the power balance within the relationship that is acceptable to both parties and cognitively judged. Jahansoozi (2006:77, 78) states that, in reality, there will always be a power mismatch between organisation and public. For example suppliers that have an exchange relationship with the organisation, will also hold more power in their relationship with the organisation and be able to influence the agenda and outcomes of engagement, than what the community would hold in a more communal relationship. However, the two-way symmetrical paradigm asks ideally for power to be equally divided.
- Trust indicates the level of confidence in each other, particularly pertaining to integrity (fair and just), dependability (do what it says it will do) and competence (has ability to do what it said it will do). This is also judged from a cognitive point of view.
- Commitment is seen as the willingness to spend energy on maintaining and growing the relationship. It is judged emotionally.
- Satisfaction is the extent to which the relationship is positively experienced. This encompasses affection and is judged emotionally.

Hon and Grunig (1999:1-40) tested and verified a questionnaire based on these concepts and determined that it quantitatively tested relationship health satisfactorily. Later Grunig (2002:1-7) also provided a qualitative interview schedule to evaluate the quality of these concepts in a particular relationship. Le Roux (2008:264-281) explained the adaptation of the quantitative scale to the South African environment.

Continued research is being done on the measurement of relationships. For instance, Welch (2006:138-155) argued that both the dimensions of trust and distrust should be present in a relationship in order for both parties to protect their interests. Such a measurement still needs to be included in relationship description and measurement.

The contribution of the relationship management theory to this study lies in the fact that it assist practitioners in showing their value to the organisation by establishing, managing and

measuring relationships, and therefore places the practitioner at the management table or boardroom.

2.2.4.2. Corporate communication roles theory

The corporate communication roles theory suggests that practitioners perform different roles in the organisation according to the tasks they perform the most. Roles "… describe daily behavior patterns of individual communication practitioners" (Grunig, 1992a:19), which yield predictable outcomes (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:196). A role can therefore be seen as the range of tasks or a standard set of behaviours that the practitioner needs to exhibit to produce excellent communication, which will contribute to organisational performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000:14). Petersen *et al.* (2002:1) argues that role enactments are directly related to the perceived benefits of public relations to the organisation. Determining roles has also contributed to enhance the image of public relations to more than simply a technical function and enhance the function's standing within the organisation (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145).

A role is also influenced by the individual's environment (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597), which can force a person to perform multiple roles, for example that of manager, secretary, councillor, and so forth (Steyn & Puth, 2000:14). Within any organisation there is an interwoven set of roles that are being played (Bassett, 1996:37; Johnson, 1989:253-254).

By allowing to be classified into a specific role, a person also has to deliver on the normative expectation of that role (Bassett, 1996:37; Johnson, 1989:253-254), which can place a burden on the person fulfilling the role. Furthermore, Grunig *et al.* (2002:201) also mention role ambiguity as unclear or inconsistent messages of role expectations, which can be very demoralising for practitioners. Conversely, role ambiguity gives practitioners room to enact behaviour that they deem necessary for strategic work (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:201).

The public relations practitioner can therefore perform many tasks from various roles, which implies that a single practitioner may be classified as enacting more than one role. Moss *et al.* (2000:292, 300) argue that their study supports the findings that practitioners combine elements of different roles in their daily work, thereby combining roles to match the context at hand. Clear categorisation of roles is therefore not as simple as first suggested. Nevertheless, current thinking mitigates that the practitioner should be classified into the role most frequently performed or enacted (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:223).

Academic literature clearly describes the history of the public relations role research and findings (ref. Everett, 2006:24-27; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597-600; Moss, 2000:1-2; Moss *et al.*, 2000:278; Petersen *et al.*, 2002:1-4; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-146). Different public relations roles have been identified in different countries relating to the specific environments of those specific countries. This includes the research done in the USA by Broom and Dozier that was published from 1979 onwards. It conceptualised the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and corporate communication technician (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205-207; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:197-198; Steyn & Puth, 2000:15; Warnaby & Moss, 1997:16-17). Many authors see Broom as the father of public relations role research (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:241). Broom's research sparked a debate on public relations practitioner role playing that contributed greatly to the public relations body of knowledge (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597-600; Moss, 2000:1-10; Moss & Green, 2001:118-132).

Many articles and papers criticised public relations role research (ref. Moss, 2000:1-10), which led to further research on other roles and in countries other than the USA (Dozier & Broom, 1995:3-26; Moss, 2000:1-10, Steyn, 2000c:20-43; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-158). ***This study will not research the history of public relations role development, but will focus on the application of the empirically verified public relations roles pertaining to the South African environment.*** For a summary of the roles previously defined in various countries, refer to Steyn (2000c:26; 2000b:6-7) or Everett (2006:24-27).

Two concerns were raised on the role research that was previously conducted. First, the concern was the focus of research on USA public relations roles alone (Moss, 2000:108). This has, however, in recent years been countered with roles research being done in various other countries. For instance, in Europe four public relations roles were identified, which included the reflective, managerial, operational, and educational roles (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:380), and in South Africa the strategist, managerial and technician roles were identified (Everett, 2006:87-103; Steyn, 2000b:1-42; 2000c:20-43). A comparison of the South African roles with the European roles is discussed in Steyn and Bütschi (2003:1-33).

Second, the concern was that role research had been done from a one-sided perspective of role enactment, namely that of the practitioner (Johnson, 1989:244; Moss, 2000:108). Traditionally, the actions performed by practitioners in their daily work have been grouped through research and categorised into certain roles. The categories were developed through

an examination of secondary literature and empirical tests that asked practitioners to report on what they do (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:221).

Some authors consequently argue that, to understand the role and role expectations clearly, one needs to examine both the *receiver* and the ***sender's*** expectations of the role (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:197; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:599; Johnson, 1989:243, 255). These expectations of the role played and the context in which the role is performed, could explain why people will adjust their roles (Johnson, 1989:247-248) or experience role strain (when a person cannot perform a role) (Bassett, 1996:38). However, Bassett (1996:38) also argues for flexibility in roles to assist the organisation in adapting to the environment.

In South Africa, Steyn (2000c:26) addressed this concern by obtaining the opinion and expectations of the role of the South African public relations practitioner from CEOs. Steyn (2000b:20-21) started by identifying practitioners belonging to PRISA, IABC, UNITECH and SACOMM, and then identifying the relevant CEOs to whom these practitioners report. From the 400 CEOs contacted, 103 useable questionnaires were obtained. Based on the information received from the CEOs, Steyn (2000b:21) then developed a questionnaire with 25 statements to determine the role performed by the South African public relations practitioner, with nine statements pertaining to the strategist, ten to the manager, and six to the technician.

Steyn's (2000b:1-42; 2000c:20-43) research was supported by findings from the research of Petersen *et al.* (2002:14). These authors targeted PRISA members and received 208 valid questionnaires. They identified the liaison role, which they equated with the boundary-spanning role between the organisation and stakeholders; the media-relations role and the cultural-interpreter role, where the practitioner has to work across cultures to interpret the organisation and stakeholders to each other (Petersen *et al.*, 2002:14). These roles relate strongly to Steyn's strategist role (Steyn, 2000c:30-37; see section 1.8.2. and 2.2.4.2.1.).

Everett conducted the third leg of international role research led by United Kingdom academic Danny Moss, by studying South African practitioner roles from the practitioners' point of view. Everett's Master degree findings were discussed in the article by Everett and Steyn (2006:1-31). In the research of Moss *et al.* (2004:873-890) five public relations roles were identified in the UK, namely monitor and evaluator, key policy and strategy advisor, issue management expert, trouble-shooter or problem-solver, and communications technician (Everett & Steyn, 2006:1).

Everett realised 128 questionnaires from PRISA and IABC members (Everett & Steyn, 2006:1, 6), using the same measurement instrument as Moss *et al.* (2004:880-881). After extensive statistical analysis the five-role solution suggested by Moss gave weak statistical results for Everett's study. Through a two-factor solution, two roles – that of the strategist (strategic public relations manager), and that of the manager (operational public relations manager) were statistically verified (Everett & Steyn, 2006:12-14).

The combination of Everett and Steyn's research provided the role sender and receiver's views in the South African public relations context. Most importantly both studies identified and statistically verified the technician, manager and strategist roles for the corporate communication practitioner in the South African environment (Everett, 2006:101-103; Steyn, 2000c:30-37).

As alluded to earlier in this section, the three-role categorisation as defined for South African practitioners will be used in this study. This includes the strategist, manager and technician roles, which are practised on the macro, meso and micro levels respectively. By performing public relations on these three levels the practitioners contribute to organisational performance (Grunig, in Steyn, 2000c:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17).

Each of these roles will now be discussed in more detail.

2.2.4.2.1. The South African public relations strategist

The need for the strategic role of the practitioner was both identified in Moss *et al.*'s (2000:301) and Grunig's (2001:6,8) research. The contribution of specifically public relations to strategic management was identified in the Excellence Study as "… the single characteristic that most distinguished excellent public relations from less-excellent public relations functions" (Grunig, 2001:6,8). Many authors are in agreement with this statement, arguing that the strategic role is needed to assist organisations to be excellent and competitive in their changing environment (De Beer, 2001:2). This, in turn, will assist the practitioner to move into the dominant coalition (Bütschi & Steyn, 2006:106-109).

Strategic management focuses on analysing the environment (environmental scanning) in which the organisation operates and adapts the mission, vision and values of the organisation to this context (Grunig, 2001:6; Steyn, 2007:139, 141; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17). By assisting the organisation in making sense of the environment, including stakeholders who are familiar to the practitioner (Grunig, 2001:7; Steyn & Puth, 2000:19), the practitioner

can contribute, and even lead strategy development (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205). Specifically in a more volatile organisational environment there would be a greater need for the role of the practitioner as described above (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205; Moss *et al.*, 2000:283).

The strategic function of public relations is hence practiced at the macro level (societal level) (Steyn, 2003a:23-24; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20) and encompasses the typical boundary-spanning role. The boundary spanner needs to act as a liaison agent between the organisation and its stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19) and helps the organisation adapt to changes in the environment (Warnaby & Moss, 1997:13). The boundary-spanning role consists of two actions: first, obtaining information and feeding it into the organisation, and second, disseminating information from the organisation to stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:2; Steyn, 2000c:30).

In the first boundary-spanning action, the practitioner assists the organisation by obtaining and feeding information from the environment into the organisation, to management, to assist the organisation in understanding and adapting to the environment (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:251; Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; Steyn, 2000c:30). In this task the practitioner needs to scan the environment for issues at the societal level and their consequences for the organisation, and needs to communicate these risks back to management for consideration in strategic decision-making (Steyn, 2007:146). The practitioner therefore needs to reflect stakeholders' view of the organisation back to the organisation to balance the organisation's behaviour within the environment and ensure the organisation's concern for broader societal issues.

The organisation will consequently become deserving of public trust and earn social acceptance when operating in equilibrium with the environment through the actions of the practitioner (Holström, in Steyn, 2004:71; Steyn, 2007:139). Through this method the views of stakeholders are incorporated into strategic decision-making (Grunig, 2001:9; Steyn, 2000c:29-30; 2003a:23-24; 2004:71; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20). According to Steyn and Puth (2000:19), the public relations practitioner in this role acts as an "... early warning system that identifies issues before a crisis erupts".

Sharpe (2000:358) supported the importance of this intermediary function by stating that "Management tend to hear selectively, and what they allow themselves to hear may result in incorrect conclusions". The public relations strategist therefore needs to hold "… a degree of detachment from the motives that drive other members of management" (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

The *feeding information into the organisation*-role is similar to the mirror function (Steyn, 2000c:30), as well as the European reflective task (Steyn & Bütschi, in Steyn, 2004:72), or also referred to as the *outside-in approach* (Steyn, 2007:146).

The second task of the boundary spanner is to share the organisation's views and interpret the organisation to stakeholders (Steyn, 2000c:30; Steyn & Puth, 2000:19), similar to the window function (Steyn, 2004:71). Grunig (2001:9) argued that the function of relating organisational standpoints and information to stakeholders are specifically a strategic task and will ensure that the organisation acts socially responsible (Steyn, 2007:139).

The activities carried out in in the strategist role, which were empirically identified and verified, includes the following (Everett, 2006:101-102; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18):

- Identifying strategic stakeholders and issues to manage external intelligence, and feeding this information into the strategic decision-making process as building relationships with stakeholders, managing issues and avoiding conflict. The implications of strategic decisions on stakeholders are also explained to management (environmental scanning, issues management, boundary spanning).
- Actively building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and developing high-level communication programmes to deal with strategic issues and stakeholders.
- Contributing to policy making.
- Liaison with the media.
- Reputation risk management.
- Strategic internal stakeholder relationship management.
- Positioning of the public relations department.
- Responsibility for public relations strategy.

In the research of Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:37), the South African public relations strategist role was determined by using the following statements, which produced high reliability scores as indicated:

Table 2.3: Measurement indices for the strategist role

Crönbach alpha reliability coefficient findings by Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:37)	Role statements
0.829	Explain to top management the impact of their behaviour (obtained through research) on key external stakeholder (media, investors, communities)
0.776	Act as *early warning system* to top management before issues erupt into crises
0.772	Act as advocate for key external stakeholder by explaining their views to top management
0.748	Reduce uncertainty in strategic decision-making by interpreting the external environment to top management
0.684	Initiate dialogue with pressure groups limiting the organisation's autonomy, for example environmentalists or consumer advocates or legislators

2.2.4.2.2. The South African public relations manager

The South African manager role (and technical role discussed below) both form part of the expressive tasks identified in the reflective paradigm (Steyn & Bütschi, in Steyn, 2004:72). It focuses on the expressive (inside-out) window function of building symbolic relations by assisting the organisation to express itself to stakeholders (Steyn, 2000c:29-30; 2003a:24; 2004:71-72). The practitioner therefore gives input on the functional strategy by advising on consequences of behaviour and suggesting communication messages. Furthermore, the public relations manager formulates strategy and plans for messages to be communicated outside the organisation at the meso level (functional, departmental or divisional level) (Steyn, 2000c:31; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20).

It is important to note that the South African public relations manager role is a redefinition of the previously identified managerial roles in research from countries other than South Africa (Steyn & Puth, 2000:20).

Steyn (2007:140-141) further distinguishes between a managerial role with a strategic mandate and without a strategic mandate in the South African environment. A manager with a strategic mandate would be able to develop public relations strategies to address and align

the organisation's strategic goals, and be able to implement and measure the achievement of strategic goals. A manager without a strategic mandate would only implement functional plans to support strategies, measure these, and support other functions' communication efforts.

In their research in the USA, Grunig *et al.* (2001:248) found that female managerial practitioners included a broader range of activities in their role than their male counterparts. This finding was not supported in the Steyn (2000b:1-43) and Everett (2006:1-167) studies that focused on the South African environment.

Although Everett (2006:102-103) named the managerial role the *operational managerial role*, it corresponds directly with the *manager* role defined and verified by Steyn (2000c:30-37). Owing to the accepted forms of use in South Africa, the terminology *managerial role* will be used in this study.

The public relations manager role includes the following activities (Everett, 2006:102-103; Steyn, 2007:140-141):

- Developing deliberate public relations strategy on the meso-level that aligns with the strategic goals of the organisation.
- Developing emerging public relations strategies in reply to internal, societal and stakeholder issues that align with the strategic goals of the organisation.
- Developing, implementing and evaluating public relations plans that address the foregoing strategies in support of other organisational functions, and in support of top management communication to employees.
- Educating organisational leaders on their communication responsibilities.
- Managing activities, workloads and the budget of the public relations support function, including demands for communication support.
- Commissioning external agencies to evaluate communication strategies.
- Leading and controlling the public relations department.

In the research of Steyn (2000c:37; 2000b:33), the South African public relations manager role was determined by using the following statements, which produced high reliability scores as indicated in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Measurement indices for the manager role

Crönbach alpha reliability coefficient findings by Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:37)	Role statements
0.856	Take responsibility for the success or failure of corporate communication plans
0.802	Take responsibility for the success or failure of corporate communication strategy
0.716	Develop corporate communication strategy that supports corporate strategy
0.640	Manage the implementation of corporate communication plans
0.628	Monitor the performance of corporate communication practitioners or sub-divisions

2.2.4.2.3. The South African public relations technician

Steyn (2000c:26) argues that the role as technician is empirically and conceptually distinct from the managerial role, although both the manager and the technician perform the expressive window function (communication is used to express the organisation to stakeholders).

The technician specifically implements the strategy and plans devised by the manager on operational level (Steyn, 2003a:23-24; 2007:147; Steyn & Puth, 2000:21). This role is conducted at the micro implementation or programme level, and is traditionally played by most practitioners. The role of the public relations technician, as identified in South Africa, remains unchanged from previous research (Steyn, 2000c:31; Steyn & Puth, 2000:21).

The typical technician role includes that the technician is not involved in decision-making, but can give input into planning by assisting management to plan how messages should be sent to stakeholders. The technician generates communication products that implement the plans made by others by using their skills such as writing, editing, producing audiovisual messages, and creating graphics. The practitioner furthermore develops plans to align the communication activities of various departments (Steyn, 2000c:26; 2007:147).

The following table shows the measurement indices used to determine the technician role in South Africa (Steyn, 2000b:33; 2000c:36).

Table 2.5: Measurement indices for the technician role

Crönbach alpha reliability coefficient findings by Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:36)	Role statements
0.867	Write articles for the publications of the organisation
0.863	Keep a media clipping-service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)
0.840	Generate publicity, for example writing media releases
0.788	Produce audio-visual materials for presentations
0.777	Organise special events, for example open houses, exhibitions or gala evenings
0.682	Edit public relations material, for example speeches or the annual report

2.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter explained how the researcher conceptualised the study by discussing the paradigms, meta-theory and theories applied. A combination of the relational, reflective, two-way symmetrical and feminist paradigms was used so as not to limit the exploration of this particularly complex research problem. This was followed by a discussion of the general excellence theory as meta-theory, and the relationship management and corporate communication roles theories as specific theories which apply the paradigms to practice. The corporate communication roles theory specifically defines the roles of public relations strategist, manager and technician within the South African environment, which were used in this study.

The theory provides the framework for the next chapter where the specific influences on corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, as

identified in literature, will be discussed. The chapter will culminate in a list of concepts and constructs identified that this study has tested within the South African environment.

CHAPTER 3 VARIABLES INFLUENCING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS IN CONTRIBUTING TO ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the theoretical framework for the study by discussing the paradigms, meta-theory and theories used to conceptualise the study.

This chapter aims to further this discussion by examining the specific variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, as mentioned in literature, to answer Specific research question one:

> ***Specific research question 1***
> *Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally?*

The researcher will explain how the variables influencing practitioners identified in literature can be categorised into five levels of variables, followed by a detailed discussion of each level. The chapter concludes with a list of constructs and concepts pertaining to the variables influencing corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, as identified in literature.

3.2. PREVIOUS STUDIES INVESTIGATING THE VARIABLES INFLUENCING PRACTITIONERS

Many studies have attempted to understand the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

Some authors have tried to create models that depict the variables influencing public relations practitioners in contributing to organisational performance and to determine the underlying correlations between these variables (ref. Dozier & Broom, 1995:6; Hill *et al.*, 1994:213-227; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:601; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:216-218). Other authors tried to, by describing a clear career path and progression, assist practitioners to grow and thereby contribute to the organisation (ref. Wolf, 2006:181-183). Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a:2) however, have focused on the influence of country-related variables on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. These include culture, political systems, economic systems, extent of activism, level of development, and media system of these countries (ref. Grunig, 2001:19; 2006a; Le Roux & Naudé, 2006:1-31; see section 1.2. and 3.7.).

Various other country-specific studies focussing on the variables influencing the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance have also been completed. As example, a study by Gupta (2007:306-312) reviewed the variables influencing the professionalisation of public relations in India. However, the findings are very specific to India, and not very applicable to other countries. Another study by Shin *et al.* (2006:184-185) examined the variables at the organisational and individual-levels and their influence on the practice of corporate communication in South Korea, where it was found that organisational-level variables appeared to be most significant in distinguishing between managerial and technical public relations, and that individual-level variables relating to the abilities and characteristics of individual professionals were most influential on their practices. O'Neil (2003a:159-169) studied the influence that public relations could have on the organisation and variables that influence the practitioner's impact on the organisation in the USA. Specifically the influence of power and related methods on the practitioner's influence on management, was investigated.

In a South African study, Le Roux (2004:1-54) divided the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, into three levels, namely individual, organisational, and communication-profession variables. The study also contributed to the body of knowledge by identifying a few variables not mentioned in literature, for example the importance of international exposure (see section 3.4.2.1.), and dividing communication work into core and context as a method of managing the practitioner's workload (see section 3.4.3.4.).

None of these studies and models, however, took into account *all* the possible variables that can affect the practitioner. Each study only focused on a specific group of variables.

The most comprehensive study to examine the variables influencing practitioners would be the Excellence Study (Grunig, 2001:16; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:3, 10; see sections 1.7.2., 2.2.2.3. and 2.2.3.2.). The Excellence Study tried to identify the variables influencing the practitioner and prerequisites for the practitioner's environment, which will allow the practitioner to perform excellent public relations and thus contribute to organisational performance. The findings can either be summarised according to programme, departmental or organisational-level, and effects of excellent public relations (Grunig, 1992a:28), or according to three spheres, which include shared expectations between management and the practitioner, the sufficient knowledge base of the communication department, and a corporate communication conducive organisational culture (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:7). The findings rest mainly on:

- First, the *paradigm* through which public relations should be practised (two-way symmetrical through the application of the mixed-motive model),
- second, the *organisational environment* ideal for excellent public relations (including, for example, organisational culture, management support, shared expectations, and the like), and
- third, the *characteristics of the practitioner* (which includes knowledge to use the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models, and to play the communication manager role) (ref. Dozier *et al.,* 1995:7; Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26, 28; 1992b: 531; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1, 10, 543-546; Grunig & White, 1992:38, 54, 61).

Later it was also argued that the excellence principles should be adapted to the specific environment of each country (Grunig, 2001:19; 2006a; Le Roux & Naudé, 2006:1-31; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:2). This was done for the South African environment by the University of Pretoria, as described in section 1.3.1.2.

Although being the most comprehensive study, the Excellence Study did not take into account, to name a few, the influence of variables such as race and affirmative action, age of the practitioner or management, and the influence of the role of professional bodies.

Consequently, not one study provides a comprehensive list, or overview, or prioritisation of all the variables that influence the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, nor does it provide suggestions as to what the practitioner should do to overcome the variables with a negative influence on their contribution to organisational performance. The studies or models also did not specifically include all the variables influencing the practitioner on the industry-level, and in many cases also not country-related variables, as suggested in sections 1.2. and 3.7.

Therefore the researcher will not focus in the literature study on a single model, or a single author's interpretation of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisations performance, but rather conduct a broader literature study to try to identify and describe all the possible variables mentioned in literature.

3.3. LEVELS OF VARIABLES INFLUENCING PRACTITIONERS' CONTRIBUTION TO ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

There are a myriad of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. However, it must be kept in mind that many of these variables are not only pertaining to the corporate communication profession, but surface in other professions as well, for example (to name just a few) affirmative action in the police service, accounting, and the engineering profession (De Lange, 2009; De Klerk, 2009), gender discrimination in the chemical and metallurgical engineering professions, and even in athletics (Cooper, 2009; Sole *et al.*, 2009:1-44).

To discuss the variables influencing corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance in an organised manner, the variables are categorised into five levels, namely individual, organisational, industry, country and professional-level (see figure 3.1).

These categories are, however, not mutually exclusive, but provide an organised method to analyse the variables that will be examined in this study. Some variables may potentially fit into more than one category. However, for purposes of discussion they are categorised in a particular category.

Another important point to bear in mind is that these categories influence one another and cannot be isolated from one another, as indicated by the arrows in figure 3.1. For instance, the political orientation of the country (country-level variable) can determine the application of affirmative action in the country, and taking the practitioner's race (individual-level variable) into account, can be argued to be a positive or negative influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

The different categories of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance (see figure 3.1) can be described as follows:

- **Individual-level variables**
  Variables influencing practitioners and pertaining to the individual's characteristics are included in this category.

- **Organisational-level variables**
  Any variables pertaining to the organisation in which the practitioner works, are discussed on the organisational-level.

- **Industry-level variables**
  The historic role of public relations within, as well as the specific industry environment in which the practitioner's employer operates, could impact on the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

- **Country-level variables**
  The country-level variables entails the cultural, political and economic systems of a country, the extent of activism, the level of development and the media systems used in the country that has an influence on the practitioner or the environment in which the practitioner operates.

- **Professional-level variables**
  Variables pertaining to the professional-level are included in this level, for example, professional legacy, the lack of a clear public relations definition, lack of recognition and showing the importance of the function, which includes the role of professional bodies.

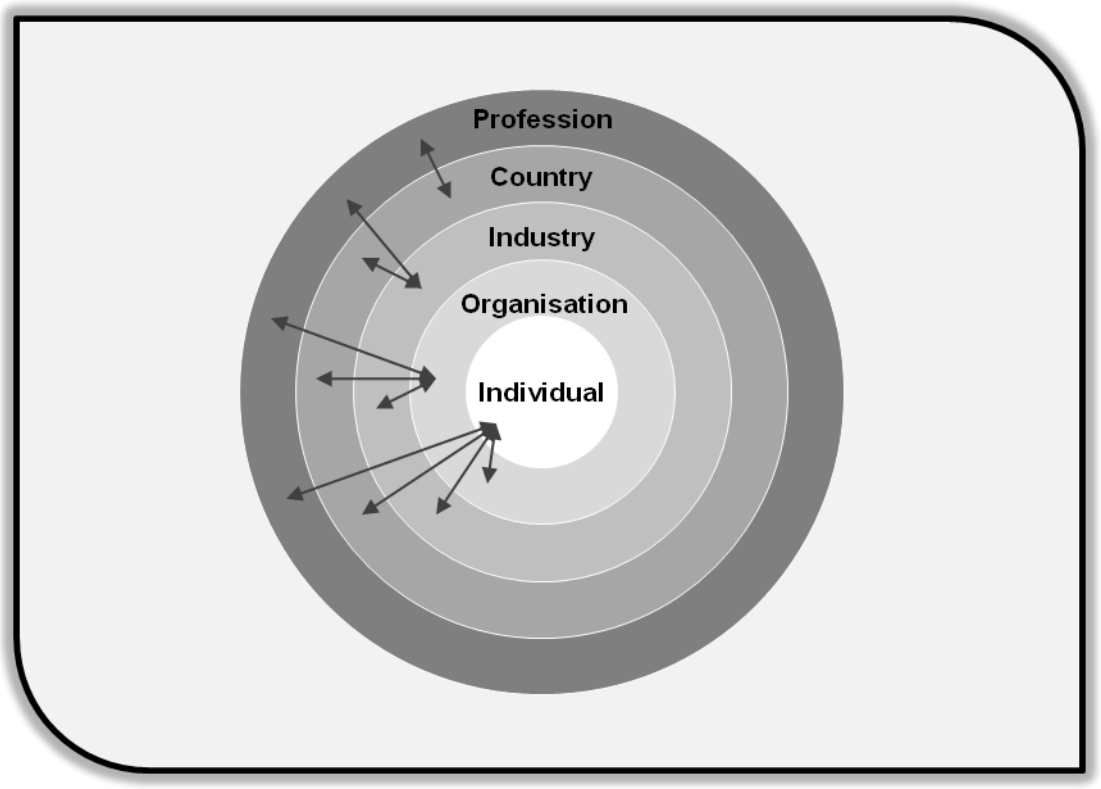


Figure 3.1: Diagrammatical presentation of the levels of variables influencing practitioners

(Source: Author's own construction)

Each of the five levels of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, will now be discussed in more detail.

3.4. INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

Variables categorised into the individual-level include practitioner characteristics, the practitioner's history, and the practitioner's career management. On the one hand demographical information describes practitioners. However, on the other hand, these characteristics may be an indication of the practitioner's ability to contribute to organisational performance.

3.4.1. Practitioner Characteristics

The characteristics of practitioners include demographic information, which can identify the practitioner, and which can potentially become a basis for discrimination and stereotyping within the work environment.

3.4.1.1. Age

The South African studies of Holtzhausen *et al.* (2005:409) found practitioners to have a median age of 38, while Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) reported most practitioners to be between the ages of 30 and 49. De Wet *et al.* (2008:3) found most practitioners to be between 40-49 years of age (42.3%, n=26), with the bulk of respondents being between 20 and 49 years (80.8%, n=26). It seems that South African practitioners tend to be fairly young, which is similar to other international findings (Beard, 1997:12; IABC, 2002:24).

An age balance is needed within the profession, to ensure the transfer of knowledge from older colleagues to younger ones (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:16). Age can also possibly relate to the practitioner's time working in the organisation, as well as their years of experience in the function. However, Le Roux (2004:39) suggested that younger practitioners be appointed to higher level positions, regardless of the experience of older practitioners. There is consequently not an ideal age to be within the profession, as some practitioners are seen as *too old* and others as *too young* to contribute to organisational performance (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:315).

The age of practitioners may also lead to conflict within the ranks of the public relations practitioner community, as younger practitioners may compete to fill the shoes of older practitioners (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:16).

3.4.1.2. Race

It is interesting to note that, in the 1970s (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:34, 37), affirmative action implemented in the USA to employ women, led to the same problems faced by current affirmative action appointments in South Africa. These problems include that black practitioners may lack the necessary skills to perform corporate communication that contributes to the organisation's performance, or they may have the necessary skills but are viewed by management as token appointments who are not expected to be able to make a

contribution to organisational performance (ref. Coetzee, 2005:2.9-2.11; Thomas & Jain, 2004:45). This then results in the appointee suffering from a loss of confidence (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:267) and practitioners subsequently job-hopping to overcome the situation. This *revolving-door* syndrome is found across professions where affirmative action is implemented (ref. Coetzee, 2005:2.9-2.11).

Specifically in a country where discrimination based on race has been part of the history of the country, the practice of affirmative action and quotas can create racial insensitivity, tension and mistrust in the workplace (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2001:148; Tindall, 2009:444). In addition Dinsbach *et al.* (2007:725, 740) reported that employees from minority groups expect less from their jobs, and therefore report more positive attitudes towards their jobs, although they are typically excluded from and find it difficult to maintain personal relations at work.

In South Africa the application of affirmative action in the corporate communication profession has had some consequences. Many black practitioners have been appointed to high-level corporate communication positions as a window-dressing, affirmative action exercise (see *pigeonholing*[13] in section 3.5.3.3.), and in many cases older, white employees are asked to retire sooner or are moved to limited positions with the organisation. In addition, it would seem that the communication industry still does not reflect the demographics representative of the South African population. To address this issue, the professional bodies in the communication industry recently signed the MAC Charter in which they commit to further transformation in the industry (Pahad, 2005).

However limited information is available on the racial breakdown of South African public relations practitioners. Race was not taken into account in the South African studies of Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:224-229), or Holtzhausen (2005:407-416), or De Wet *et al.* (2008:1-31), or by the application of the Excellence Study to the South African environment (ref. De Beer, 2001:1-361; Groenewald, 1998a:42-72; Steyn, 2000b:1-43; Van Heerden, 2004:1-287), which leads to the need for more information being available on this aspect within the corporate communication profession.

[13] '*Pigeonholing' refers to a situation where the practitioner is appointed as a token appointment (Grunig et al., 2001:152; see section 3.5.3.3.).*

One last aspect to keep in mind, however, is the practice to appoint a practitioner from a designated group in order for this practitioner to build and manage the relationship with a specific stakeholder group (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2001:152). The practitioner thus acts as a cultural intermediary for the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:155).

3.4.1.3. Gender and sexual orientation

When referring to *gender* and its influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, all the following issues need to be taken into consideration:

- the practitioner's gender,
- the feminisation of the public relations profession,
- the practitioner having a female orientation regardless of gender, and
- the practitioner having a specific sexual orientation.

Gender has been extensively researched within the discipline of public relations, and it has been suggested that the profession is feminised. It is argued that this situation could lead to a loss of credibility for the discipline as females are generally viewed as not fit for management, less competent in the workplace, and seem to take their work less seriously than their male counterparts do (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:172, 180-181, 310). As an extreme example and mentioned before, Azerbaijan culture and religion dictates that male practitioners must substitute female practitioners in leading positions (Tsetsura, 2004:336).

Grunig *et al.* (2001:4) reported salary discrimination based on gender, even where male and female practitioners were appointed in the same positions. Conversely, other researchers argued that these findings are based on the fact the women tend to perform a technical role (Dozier & Broom, 1995:3,7,20; Dozier *et al.,* 1995:149, 158, 159; Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Moss, 2000:3; Moss *et al.,* 2000: 279, 291, 294, 303). Performing the technical role itself, as discussed in section 2.2.4.2.3., could lead to limited career-advancement opportunities and a possible limited contribution to organisational performance (Dozier *et al.,* 1995:158, 159; Hon *et al.*, 1992:419, 421; Toth *et al.,* 1998:2).

However, even in the last few years authors have not agreed on this issue. Aldoory and Toth (2002:122) add that there are still gender discrepancies in hiring, promoting and renumerating female practitioners, leading to the glass ceiling (an invisible barrier to females wishing to advance their careers (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:87)). Sha and Toth (2005:93-99) posit in their study that gender differences in the profession are so pronounced that students should be taught about gender difference challenges in the field from their undergraduate

years onwards. Furthermore, Van Ruler and De Lange (2003:155) reported a negative correlation between being a woman and holding a higher position, although age influenced this finding.

In contrast, the studies of Gupta (2007:307) and O'Neil (2003b:161) separately reported an equal number of male and female practitioners in public relations in both the USA and India. In addition, Hutton (2005:82) found that, by analysing the data from the *PR Week 2001 Annual Salary Survey*, that there is no evidence to support gender discrimination in the USA public relations profession. He (2005:73) does, however, agree that circumstantial evidence of salary discrimination existed 20 years ago (Hutton, 2005:74), but are not valid anymore. It is suggested that women have an equal opportunity to enact a strategic role in departments where there are more strategic positions (Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155).

Through affirmative action, both locally and internationally, some women have been pushed into positions which they were not ready to fulfil, enhancing the stereotype of women not being suited for business. The result is that any female who now wants to make an impact on the profession needs to prove that she is a *superwoman* (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:311) to gain individual credibility.

However, feminisation cannot be held solely accountable for the loss of credibility of the profession. Le Roux (2004:37) found that female South African practitioners could limit discrimination and stereotyping by gaining business knowledge, proving their contribution to the organisation, and being convinced of their own worth in the organisation. Acting more like men was found not to solve this problem of stereotyping (Hon *et al.*, 1992:430, 434).

In addition, it has been argued that practitioners with a female orientation – be they male or female – are ideally suited for public relations as they act more socially responsible and naturally apply two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:22). Previously, in the 1970s, it was argued that the masculine stereotype is ideal for managerial positions. However, this was later realised to not support business growth (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:26). It was also found that management style was more focused on personal traits than on gender (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:242).

The argument above raises awareness of homosexual practitioners. For instance, can homosexual male practitioners – typically stereotyped to have a more female orientation – be considered as practitioners that contribute more to organisational performance? According to Woods and Lucas (in Grunig *et al.*, 2001:125), due to the stereotyping mentioned above and

various other reasons, homosexuals has traditionally been pushed into support functions such as public relations.

Unfortunately, public relations research focussing on practitioners, has mostly examined practitioner diversity in terms of gender, age and to some extent race. Little attention has been paid to the contribution, opportunities or discrimination[14] faced by homosexual public relations practitioners (Waters & Tindall, 2007:2, 32). Research has only focussed on the fact that homosexual practitioners need to be employed, in order to assist the organisation to understand, build and maintain relationships with homosexual stakeholder groups (Waters & Tindall, 2007:2, 5-6).

In South African studies, Holtzhausen (2005:409) reported a split of 70% female practitioners to 30% male in their study, and Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) found 64% of their respondents to be female. These findings would suggest that the public relations profession has been feminised in South Africa, with just a few males entering the profession, similar to other countries (ref. Kim & Reber, 2008:338).

3.4.1.4. Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a method for a person to eliminate uncertainty by setting expectations according to a person's characteristics, thereby creating some predictability (Shepard in Grunig *et al.*, 2001:23). Stereotyping is not limited to the public relations profession. However, similar to other professions, the stereotyping of practitioners according to race, age, gender and so forth, has hurt the public relations profession. Specifically stereotypes of female practitioners and even positive stereotypes have *pigeonholed* and dehumanised the person (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:23; Yamashita in Grunig *et al.*, 2001:26).

Stereotyping can prevent the practitioners from optimally contributing to organisational performance by impacting practitioners' credibility, access to the dominant coalition, and limiting the practitioner to performing the technical role. However, for the practitioner to be able to contribute organisational performance, s/he needs to not be stereotyped, or needs to overcome the stereotyping.

[14] Interestingly discrimination towards homosexual practitioners regarding their career progress are in some instances referred to as the 'lavender ceiling' and not the typical 'glass ceiling' (Waters & Tindall, 2007:32).

3.4.1.5. Personality

Over many years various authors have tried to describe the successful practitioner's ideal personality (Bhimani, 1995:29; Black, 1995:179; Bowman & Ellis, 1977:275; Budd, 1992:37; Nielsen, 2006:1-7; Rogers, 1980:233; Sharpe, 2000:345-361; Yeomans, 2007:213). The following table summarises the suggestions of various authors:

Table 3.1: Suggestions of authors on the personality traits of the practitioner

Personality trait	Author							
	Nielsen (2006:1-7)	Yeomans (2007:213)	Rogers (1980:233)	Black (1995:179)	Sharpe (2000:345-361)	Bhimani (1995:29)	Bowman & Ellis (1977:275)	Budd (1992:37)
Character	×							
Integrity, trust, good judgement	×				×	×	×	×
Emotional intelligence, sensitive towards others		×	×	×		×		
Creativity, initiative, resourceful				×		×	×	×
Curiosity, continuous learning				×		×	×	
Capacity for hard work				×		×	×	
Critical analytical abilities, problem solving						×		×
Flexibility				×		×		
Common sense				×		×		
Mastery of spoken and written language				×				
Organisational skills						×		
Sense of humour						×		
Detail orientation						×		
Have energy							×	
Optimistic								×

The personality traits most agreed on by these authors are integrity, trust and good judgement. Thereafter, emotional intelligence and sensitivity towards others, as well as creativity, initiative and resourcefulness were cited. Both Awad (1985:25) and Black (1995:179) specifically mentioned that *liking people* was not a significant attribute for a practitioner, but rather an *interest* in people and *being sensitive* towards people would benefit practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. Sjöberg (2005:831) even suggested that more than merely only focussing on relationship building, the public relations practitioner's *attitude* and *will to add to organisational performance*, *combined with relationship building*, are argued to have contributed more to the function.

The traits of curiosity and continuous learning, a capacity for hard work, critical analytical abilities and problem solving, flexibility, and common sense, were also mentioned. Both Yeomans (2007:213) and L A Grunig (2008:121) furthermore mentioned the emotional aspects as of importance to the public relations practitioner, which are, to name a few, similar to the feminist paradigm suggestions of empathy, empowerment, nurturing relationships, and emotion management (see section 2.2.2.4.).

The various studies have not agreed on which personality traits a practitioner should have to best contribute to organisational performance. However, it is possible to deduce the most important personality traits for practitioners from these studies.

3.4.1.6. Practitioner worldview

The practitioner's worldview is crucial in analysing and interpreting stereotyping, discrimination, and solutions to problems presented in their environment.

All people hold a certain worldview (see section 2.2.1.) which helps them to organise the world around them. The specific worldviews of interest to the South African practitioner are the Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews (Van Heerden, 2004:121, 238, 241). Specifically in a country where many stakeholders may hold a worldview different from that of the practitioner, a practitioner's knowledge, adaptability and sensitivity towards the other worldview is crucial. As Newsom *et al.* (2007:58) argued:

> *… to be successful PR practitioners in a 21st-century global society, students must learn to understand and appreciate different perspectives, that is, 'worldviews', to search for universal values and norms and to provide voices*

of reason as well as arguments for balance to assure human coexistence in the context of cultural diversity.

The Afrocentric worldview typically values interpersonal relationships, where all are equal and living in harmony with nature. The Eurocentric worldview is more competitive and supports the survival of the fittest, where independence is valued and where humans should control nature (Dickinson, 2001). It could be suggested that, for the South African practitioner to be able to contribute to organisational performance, the practitioner would need to hold a worldview compatible with both the Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews, or an Afrocentric worldview (ref. Van Heerden, 2004:121). When holding such a worldview, the practitioner will be able to understand and work with stakeholders within the South African environment. As Van Heerden (2004:121) stated: "The sensitivity to the needs of others and the understanding of people as social beings is essential in the African society."

Table 3.2. provides a summary of the essence of the two worldviews:

Table 3.2: Afrocentric versus Eurocentric worldview

Afrocentric worldview	Eurocentric worldview
• Highest value of life lies in the interpersonal relationships between man	• Highest value of life lies in the object or in the acquisition of the object
• Knowledge is gained through symbolic imagery and rhythm	• Survival of the fittest is of utmost importance
• One should live in harmony with nature	• One should control and dominate nature
• Survival of the group is of utmost importance	• Individuality is most important
• Man should appropriately utilise the materials around them	• Man should be unlimited in the exploitation of the materials around them
• Spirituality and inner divinities hold the most significance	• A distant, impersonal god holds the most significance
• Key values include cooperation, collective responsibility and interdependence	• Key values include competition, independence, separateness and individual rights
• All are considered equal and are part of the group	• People are individualistic, unique and different

Adapted from Dickinson (2001)

3.4.2. Practitioner History

The practitioner's history includes aspects such as the practitioner's education, experience obtained and networking abilities.

3.4.2.1. Education

A practitioner's education will to a great extent determine their possible contribution to organisational performance. For instance practitioners need to understand that public relations "… includes more than disseminating information" (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:17). As Dozier *et al.* (1995:7) suggested, knowledge of two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical communication and the knowledge to play the communication manager role, form the knowledge base of the communication department that contributes to organisational performance.

Furthermore, practitioners need to understand when to enact technical and strategic activities to contribute the most to organisational performance (Steyn, 2000a:13-37; 2000c:41; Van Ruler, 1997:247, 248). When the strategic role is not enacted in the organisation this results in "… the confusion regarding the role of corporate communication in an organisation" (Shackleton, 2007:64).

When referring to a practitioner's education, there are two main issues to consider. First, there is the lack of appropriate training on offer and, second, the lack of agreement on a standardised set of skills needed for each job level.

When considering the lack of appropriate training available, it is useful to understand the situation in countries other than South Africa to gain some perspective on South African public relations education. Education in public relations in Western Europe is available on tertiary level, but in many instances as part of another course (Nessmann, 1995:153; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:298). Further, in Europe they seem to focus more on theoretical knowledge to develop public relations managers than their USA counterparts do (Hazleton & Cutbirth, in Nessmann, 1995:153). In addition, knowledge of research and evaluation procedures is in many cases in the USA are only gained at a Masters or doctoral level (Grunig in Plowman, 1998:242) and the insight to ask the right questions in a new situation is only exhibited at degree level (Fatt, 1996:18-19).

It could be argued that the situation is similar in South Africa to that of the USA in that South African corporate communication courses tend to focus on technical abilities and often lack a management or business perspective (Puth, 1994:40-52). It would seem that South African practitioners intending to perform the managerial or strategist role seem to need a university qualification – at one of the few universities which specialises in strategic communication – as this type of education seem to prepare them for entry-level technical roles and subsequent managerial and strategist roles.

However, professional bodies should assist active practitioners in updating their public relations skills (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:66). In South Africa, professional bodies offer various courses and workshops for continuous professional development (CPD) courses and workshops, which could improve the practitioner's knowledge and skills (IABC, 2009a; PRISA, 2009a). In many professions, the CPD courses are seen as crucial for the practitioner (Brody & Stone, 1989:5) and specifically in public relations, can assist a practitioner in contributing more to organisational performance (Taff, 2003:11).

Second, there is not an established global understanding of the skill set practitioners should have, in order to work at a specific job level. Specifically knowledge of international best practice and cultural sensitivity are important for the practitioner in dealing with international and multicultural stakeholders (Creedon & Al-Khaja, 2005:353; Peterson & Mak, 2006:416). Taylor (2001:86) regards knowledge of international public relations as so important that she argues that it should be included in undergraduate training. Similarly, Creedon and Al-Khaja (2005:353) posit that cultural understanding should also be included in public relations education. Specifically then, in a diverse stakeholder environment as present in South Africa, the practitioner would need to be aware of and sensitive to stakeholders' cultural diversity and be able to interpret this to the organisation. Furthermore, managerial, strategic and business knowledge (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4), as well as the necessary technology skills (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Kruckeberg, 2000b:145) are also needed. A further aspect, namely the management of emotion, has not yet been taken into account and been defined in any public relations skills sets. Yet this attribute is considered to be important (Yeomans, 2007:213).

Yeo and Sriramesh (2009:424) agree with Le Roux (2004:42) that public relations education within the strategic corporate communication paradigm could assist practitioners in making more strategic contributions to the organisation. In addition, being educated within the mixed-motive model and the relational perspective would equip the practitioners even better to contribute to organisational performance (Boynton, 2006:325-330; Plowman, 2005:131). A

caviat to these stipulations is that the educators who educate public relations practitioners within these paradigms and model should have contact and experience of the communication industry to best benefit the students (Brown & Fall, 2005:301). However, since South African corporate communication curricula are not aligned across educational institutions, it is very difficult to ensure that practitioners obtain the minimum required skills for each role that they need to enact. Specifically for previously disadvantaged South Africans, over and above attending the given courses, catching up with current business technology can be daunting.

In an effort to combat the lack of a standardised skill set for specific corporate communication positions, Inter-Comm, a team consisting of members from the Internal Communication Alliance, the IABC, the Internal Communication Association, and the British Communicators in Business (CiB), worked together towards the development of a knowledge and skills matrix that would provide a structure for the professional development of individuals and teams of internal corporate communication practitioners in the United Kingdom. This matrix lists the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience and standards expected from internal communication candidates at different job levels (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:27, 29), but do not in itself provide the education necessary.

In conclusion, although the importance of education is accepted, education alone will not enable the practitioner to meaningfully contribute to organisational performance. Knowledge needs to be combined with creating shared expectations between management and working within a participative organisational culture, as well as by using networking and relationship-building skills (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:11; Le Roux, 2004:39), and gaining appropriate corporate communication experience.

3.4.2.2. Experience

According to Thatcher (2005:2) and Watt (2008) there is a global lack of experienced public relations professionals, and this lack of experience limits practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. Some reasons offered for this situation include immigration, affirmative action, the progressively younger age of public relations practitioners, and the fact that practitioners are sometimes employed directly out of university without any experience (Watt, 2008).

The timespan that the profession has been active in a specific country also influences the numbers of years experience practitioners have. As expected, practitioners have less

experience in a country such as India where the public relations profession is only now starting to grow (Gupta, 2007:308), compared to a country such as the USA (Kim & Reber, 2008:339), where the profession is much more established (see table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Comparison of years of experience in public relations

Years of experience in public relations	Percentage of practitioners in the USA (Kim & Reber, 2008:339)	Percentage of practitioners in India (Gupta, 2007:308)
< 5 years	22.5	58
5-10 years	17.3	23
Between 10 – 20 years	24.3	5
> 20 years	35.8	14

It is important to note that experience is not necessarily measured in time (years) that the practitioner has spend in the profession or the organisation, but rather in their contribution to the organisation (output) (Wolf, 2006:176). Since the research of Dozier and Broom (1995:3, 14-15, 18) showed that professional experience has become an even more powerful predictor of management role enactment than gender (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:224), it is clear that practitioners should gain experience to contribute to organisational performance. However, when considering that practitioners in South Africa are expected to fulfil the strategist, managerial and technician roles (Everett & Steyn, 2006:12-14; Steyn, 2000b:21; 2000c:26), one can argue that appropriate experience should also expose them to these roles and to strategic corporate communication thinking.

3.4.2.3. Networking

Networking is more than merely handing out business cards. It is an opportunity for the practitioner to gain access to the networks of the dominant coalition, where the showcasing of their achievements and stakeholder knowledge, could earn them credibility and direct contact with the dominant coalition. This direct contact with the dominant coalition can offer the practitioner insightful information on organisational strategy. It can also offer the practitioner the opportunity to communicate stakeholder knowledge, within the framework of the strategic information received, back to the dominant coalition in order to assist the organisation in strategy formulation (Awad, 1985:25; Grunig, 2001:8; Hill *et al.*, 1994:217; Sweep *et al.*, 1994:327). Through this method the practitioner can thus use networking to advance their contribution to organisational performance (Broadbridge, 2004:559; Yaari & Krass, 2003:27A).

Networking is, however, a skill that the practitioner must acquire outside of their formal education.

3.4.3. Practitioners' Career Management

The practitioners' career goals, making a clear transition from and to positions, time taken out of their careers and management of their workload, are some of the factors that could affect their ability to contribute to organisational performance.

3.4.3.1. Career goals

Practitioners can only view public relations, and set their career goals, in so far as they have been educated in public relations and understand the depth of the function. In order to for instance have the goal of growing from a technician to become a strategist, the practitioner needs to be educated in and view public relations as both technical and strategic (ref. Gorpe & Saran, 2005:17). In addition to being aware of the various roles performed by the practitioner, the practitioner also needs to have the knowledge in order to understand when to enact technical and strategic activities. Therefore one can argue that when a practitioner is aware of the different roles and when to enact these roles and let this knowledge guide their career goals, they will be able to contribute the most to organisational performance (Steyn, 2000a:13-37; 2000c:41; Van Ruler, 1997:247, 248).

Practitioners reflect their view of corporate communication as a strategic or technical function through their career goals.

Many practitioners aspire to the technical role and would be satisfied with such a position for the duration of their careers, while other practitioners aspire to managerial levels and to perform the strategist role (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:184; Dozier, 1992:350-351). As argued in the public relations roles theory (section 2.2.4.2.), the practitioner can contribute the most to organisational performance when performing the strategist role or supporting his/her colleagues in enabling one another to perform the strategist role (De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:7; Moss *et al.*, 2000:301). Their career goals can therefore determine their potential to contribute to organisational performance.

However, practitioners decide on their career goals when they enter the profession and, according to Fatt (1996:20), tend not to pay much attention to this subject again. Fatt (1996:20) argues that this could be the reason why many practitioners are not satisfied in

their positions, as their career goals can be traced back to their own misconceptions of business and the public relations field. For instance, some practitioners in the managerial role could experience tension as they would prefer to perform the technical function. Some practitioners may also discover during their career that they are not suited for the field (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:58). Specifically then, in South Africa, the practitioner's career goals should to some extent overlap with the three corporate communication practitioner roles defined in South Africa (see section 2.2.4.2.).

Practitioners' career goals can also change over time as the practitioner matures. Female practitioners specifically need to revisit their career goals as their family responsibilities grow (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:93). Specifically in South Africa many practitioners may start out in organisations, only to then later on, start their own consultancies. This may reflect the current trend to outsource corporate communication, but also practitioners' attempts to escape affirmative action, downsizing and the like.

One solution, according to Baron (2005:13) and Wolf (2006:174, 184), could be for practitioners to document a clear career route that is regularly revisited.

3.4.3.2. Making clear transitions from positions

As mentioned in section 3.4.2.1., it is of utmost importance for practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, to know when the technical or strategic role needs to be performed (Steyn, 2000a:13-37; 2000c:41; Van Ruler, 1997:247, 248). Steyn and Green (2001:32) found this to be the case in the National Department of Housing, where the government could benefit from having senior practitioners functioning in the strategist role. The practitioners, however, did not meet this role expectation.

In South Africa, where downsizing is the order of the day, practitioners may be expected to perform both technical and managerial functions simultaneously (ref. Bassett, 1996:38; Moss *et al.*, 2000:292, 300), which makes a clear transition from one position to the next very complex. However, ideally a practitioner needs to be released from technical duties to move toward strategic tasks that can contribute more to organisational performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000:228).

3.4.3.3. Taking time out of career

There are various reasons why practitioners might need to take time out of their careers. Reasons like further studies may enhance their career growth once they return to the private sector. However, reasons such as family responsibilities, which do not grow the practitioner's public relations skills, may have the opposite effect, even though public relations is seen as a career that is more accommodating towards female practitioners and their family responsibilities (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:93-94).

3.4.3.4. Managing workloads

Most practitioners, regardless of whether they are performing the strategist, managerial or technical roles, claim that their workload is too heavy (ref. Sukalac, 2008). Therefore practitioners need to find a way of managing their heavy workload.

Some practitioners prefer to attend courses offered by professional bodies (such as *How to manage your time and workload more effectively* offered by the PRCA (PRCA, 2010)), while others prefer to categorise their work into core and context as a method of prioritising tasks. Core tasks are those that align with and add to the strategic goals of the organisation, and should receive the most attention, while context tasks are tasks that the practitioner can merely influence if time permits (Le Roux, 2004:47). The practitioner should be able to adapt this thinking according to the role that they perform. This may be easier for those practitioners performing the strategist role as their tasks directly relate to organisational strategy.

However, even technicians should still be able to distinguish between tasks that contribute and align to the strategic goals of the organisation and those that do not, to manage their workload. This said, the practical application of managing their workloads can still be challenging to practitioners and negatively influence their contribution to organisational performance.

3.4.4. Summary of Individual-level Variables

Table 3.4 summarises the variables identified on the individual-level that affect the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance:

Table 3.4: Individual-level variables

Level	Constructs	Concepts

Individual	Practitioner characteristics	• Age
		  ○ Time in the organisation
		  ○ Time in the public relations field
		• Race
		  ○ Affirmative action
		  ○ Acting as a cultural intermediary
		• Gender and sexual orientation
		• Stereotyping
		• Personality
		• Practitioner worldview

	Practitioner history	• Education and skills
		  ○ Level of education in corporate communication
		  ○ International knowledge of corporate communication
		  ○ Being able to enact the mixed-motive model
		• Experience
		• Networking

	Career management	• Career goals
		  ○ Practitioner view of corporate communication
		  ○ Role enactment
		• Making clear transitions from positions
		• Taking time out of their careers
		• Managing workloads

3.5. ORGANISATIONAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

There are various variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance within the organisational environment. These include creating shared expectations with management on what public relations entails, organisational characteristics, management influence and support of public relations, mentorship, and the practitioner's job satisfaction.

3.5.1. Shared Expectations

Shared expectations focus on the individual interaction between the practitioner and management, and their shared understanding of the function's expected outputs and outcomes. It encompasses shared expectations between management and the practitioner on the following aspects:

- The demand for two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical practices;
- the importance of (ideally two-way symmetrical) interaction with external groups;
- the demand for the *communication manager* and *senior advisor* role from the dominant coalition;
- the support given to and value placed on corporate communication by the dominant coalition; and
- the contribution of the communication department to strategic planning.

Consequently, it is clear that shared expectations are crucial to enable the practitioner to perform the strategic role and in so doing contribute to organisational performance (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:14-17).

The practitioner and management in many cases do not share a common understanding of the function (Gray, 2004:26-27). Practitioners are quick to assume that management is at fault when talking about shared expectations, due to the influence of variables such as token appointments, stereotyping, industry-specific variables (such as the history of the function within an industry, see section 3.6.1.), or the lack of professional recognition.

However, Steyn (2000c:40-41) has determined that South African CEOs expect much more than technical tasks from the practitioner, while the practitioner often does not deliver on these expectations due to various reasons, one being a lack of appropriate skills and education. "The perceptions of chief executives (CEOs) are that the corporate

communication function is focused on *communication* goals and objectives without necessarily linking them to the achievement of *business* goals – they are not seen as making a contribution to the bottom line" (Steyn, 2000c:21). This is in agreement with Le Roux's (2004:37) suggestion that business knowledge and proving one's value to the organisation could enhance shared expectations between the practitioner and organisational management.

In South Africa, as is the case elsewhere, there should be a shared expectation created between management and the practitioner on the role that the practitioner should enact within the organisation.

3.5.2. Organisational Characteristics

Organisational characteristics consist of variables such as organisational size and structure, organisational culture, organisational politics, the structure and size of the public relations department and the unique stakeholder environment of the organisation.

3.5.2.1. Organisational size and structure

It was previously believed that a larger organisation would allow the practitioner more opportunities for growth, while a small organisation would limit growth opportunities. However, the size of the organisation does not necessarily determine the size of the public relations department, as the size of the public relations department is more likely determined by the responsibilities and mandate of the public relations department (Moss *et al.*, 2000:288, 299, 300; see section 3.5.2.4. below for a discussion on communication department structure and size).

Dozier and Grunig (1992:398, 402) argue that the horizontal structure of the organisation does not necessarily influence the communication function, as long as the structure is flexible and can provide the practitioner with access to the dominant coalition. Fatt (1996:19) agrees with this by commenting that a large organisation can also take decisions quickly, similar to their smaller counterparts, when they have a commitment to internal organisational communication.

When the organisation does not value or support communication, corporate communication is generally structured as a staff function reporting to a line manager outside the function, such as the marketing manager (Black, 1972:15; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600). In these cases,

the practitioner usually does not receive any prominence and therefore the contribution to organisational performance is likely to be limited (Lubbe, 1994:27). Grunig *et al.* (2002:505) concluded that "… [organisational] size did not affect excellence in communication". One can therefore deduce that organisational size does not affect the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance.

3.5.2.2. Organisational culture

Organisational culture can be defined as "… the sum total of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that organize and integrate a group of people who work together" (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:482).

According to the general excellence theory (see section 2.2.3.2.), organisational culture needs to adhere to the following three principles to enable corporate communication to contribute to organisational performance:

- Organisational culture must create *collaboration and integrate* various cultures into the organisation (Grunig, 1989:17).
- Organisational culture must create *participation and democracy* in the organisation, which limits bureaucracy and hierarchical structures (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:10; Grunig & White, 1992:55; Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26). Furthermore, a participative culture was found to have a strong interrelationship with an organic structure, symmetrical internal communication and job satisfaction (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:62).
- Organisational culture must *be open to internal and external influences and ideas*, and as such operate as an open system (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:482-483). For instance, an organisational culture that embraces new technology can influence the practitioner as the practitioner needs to acquire new competencies to understand and use new technology (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Nielsen, 2006), and at the same time offer the practitioner new opportunities for corporate communication. Some practitioners are, however, reported to view such advances negatively from the outset (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:249).

Such a culture as described by the three principles above will create an environment where teamwork is valued; where departmental goals mirror organisational goals; in which management value employees as people; where the dominant coalition is open to new ideas (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:482-483); and organisations engage in pro-activeness as displayed in their greater levels of crisis preparation (Lee *et al.*, 2007:336). In contrast, organisations where management continually seek to blame for errors will create a culture where people do

not communicate openly and try to hide mistakes (Sharpe, 2000:256), resulting in the practitioner making a limited contribution to organisational performance.

Then again, Grunig *et al.* (2002:482) suggests that corporate communication can create a *counterculture* in the organisation that changes the organisational culture to become more positive for the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance. However, it should be kept in mind that a participative culture alone will not ensure a contribution to organisational performance by the communication practitioner (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:71, 497).

3.5.2.3. Organisational politics

Organisational politics are bound to be present in every organisation. In South Africa, many employees take part in organisational politics to survive the corporate jungle. Aspects such as encroachment on the domain of others, negativity towards affirmative action, corruption, and stereotyping all add to the negative effects of organisational politics (Le Roux, 2004:39).

Although practitioners will be exposed to organisational politics, they should nevertheless follow an ethical path and remain worthy of their position of trust by not participating in organisational politics as this could negatively impact on the image of the corporate communication function in the organisation (Le Roux, 2004:47).

3.5.2.4. Structure and size of the public relations department

The size of the communication department can influence the role performed by the practitioner. Small departments demand that the practitioner perform all necessary roles, whereas large departments could allow for specialisation (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:114; Le Roux, 2004:36).

However, economic pressures can lead to the downsizing of the public relations department or the minimisation of their budget (as reported in the IABC survey of 2002, IABC, 2002:7-8), which could influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. For example, Moss (2000:2) found that downsizing in the 1990s led to a decline in the number of significant managerial role activities performed by practitioners. Nevertheless, the proper management of the public relations department (Beard, 1997:11) and the department receiving a strategic mandate (Moss *et al.*, 2000:288, 299, 300), prove to be more important influences on practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, than the size of the department. In South Africa, De Beer (2001:xvi, 337) agreed with these suggestions as it

was found that the number of employees in the communication department or even the size of the organisation does not affect advanced role-playing by top communicators. It is, however, crucial that a practitioner should be available to provide management with counsel when needed (Black, 1972:3).

Additionally, Le Roux (2004:36, 45) found that neither large nor small corporate communication departments were seen as ideal by practitioners. Large departments were reported to have problems such as communication breakdowns and territorial issues, and small departments had issues relating to capacity.

More important than the size of the public relations department, both organisations and professional bodies should encourage practitioners to create a culture of teamwork within their profession and departments. This support is crucial to obtain corporate communication excellence as it sets some practitioners free from technical work to enact managerial and strategic roles that can contribute more to organisational performance (Dozier *et al.,* 1995:11; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009:422).

3.5.2.5. The organisation's unique stakeholder environment

As alluded to when discussing the relational paradigm (section 2.2.2.1.), the reflective paradigm (see section 2.2.2.2.) and the two-way symmetrical communication paradigm (see section 2.2.2.3.), the ultimate goal of the public relations practitioner should be the creation of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and stakeholders through the application of transparent and ethical two-way symmetrical communication by following the mixed-motive model approach (Grunig, 2001:14; 2006b:3; Grunig & Haung, 2000:30; Grunig & White, 1992:42-43; Grunig *et al.,* 2002:x, 11, 356; Hon & Grunig, 1999:2; Jahansoozi, 2006:62-63; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii). Information between the organisation and stakeholder therefore needs to be exchanged freely, openly and frankly to create win-win solutions (Grunig, 1989:17; Hon & Grunig, 1999:14-15; Ledingham, 2003:195) and to gain legitimisation of the organisation by stakeholders (Steyn, 2003a:16, 17; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257).

Specifically when referring to the responsibility of the function of public relations to advocate social responsibility (Grunig, 2006a), as suggested by the general excellence theory (see section 2.2.3.2.), the reflective paradigm (see section 2.2.2.2.), and demanded by the *King Reports* in South Africa (see section 1.4.1.2.), the foregoing principles should be applied by

the practitioner to the environment and social responsibility programmes of their specific organisations.

Practitioners must particularly be aware of and knowledgeable about the unique stakeholder environment of their organisation (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64-65, 108, 195-196), which could include knowing the literacy and activist levels of stakeholders, the preferred way of communicating with them, and so forth. For instance, illiteracy rates of stakeholders and their access to communication media can force practitioners to make use of alternative media (Molleda & Moreno, 2006:106).

3.5.3. Management Variables

Management variables influencing the practitioner include management's view of and support for the role of corporate communication in the organisation; the practitioner's access to management; encroachment and *pigeonholing*, the tolerance by management of diversity, and various managerial characteristics.

3.5.3.1. Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation

Management's view of corporate communication can limit or enhance the function. As O'Neil (2003a:165) stated, "… perceptions of value has the greatest impact on public relations practitioners' organisational influence".

In agreement, the Excellence Theory suggests that, amongst others, management's view of corporate communication could influence the possible contribution by corporate communication to organisational performance (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26). Over and above management's understanding of the role of corporate communication in the organisation, management should also view the function as important enough to be a separate management function (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; 2006; Grunig & White, 1992:38), and should actively support and empower the corporate communication department (Grunig, 2006a). Many authors argue that this is already the case in many instances, as world-wide recognition and support from organisational management is growing as the importance of stakeholder support for organisation survival is recognised (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2006:114; IABC, 2002:7; Moss *et al.*, 2000:291; Valin, 2004). Notwithstanding the growing management support for the function globally, management often still do not understand the actual tasks performed, and principles used for decision-making by the practitioner (Sharpe, 2000:385;

Wright, 1998:115). In circumstances where management understands the value of corporate communication as being more than a mere technical skill set, the practitioner will be able to make a great contribution to organisational performance (Black, 1972:1; Gray, 2004:28).

Management support of the public relations function will also assist the practitioner in making a contribution to organisational performance. When the public relations practitioner is specifically supported by management and thereby empowered (given power), s/he is able to assist the organisation in saving costs from high employee turnover, absenteeism, disability claims from stress-related illness, lower productivity, and diminished quality of customer service (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:131, 186). Thus, when power is given to the public relations function, its contribution to the organisational performance becomes even more pronounced.

Although De Beer (2001:327) found that South African managers do not recognise the importance of two-way symmetrical communication and thereby limit the role of the practitioner, Steyn (2000a:1-2; 2000c:40-41) found that CEOs in South Africa expect practitioners to perform a strategic function. In agreement with Steyn, various other authors suggested that in South Africa, with its fast changing environment and focus on corporate social responsibility, there is a great need for strategic corporate communication (Steyn, 2000a:1-2; 2000c:40-41; Van Heerden, 2004:12, 15, 240, 241).

Furthermore, practitioners should accept part of the responsibility for changing management's view of the function. By acting strategically, proving their business knowledge and skills, and by continually educating management, practitioners could earn the respect of management and change their views of the function (Dozier *et al.,* 1995:85, 86; Moss *et al.*, 2000:87; Woodall & Smith, 2003:18). This, however, assumes that the practitioner obtained the necessary education, skills and experience to enact the strategic role.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, management that had a negative experience regarding public relations, would be hard to convince of the benefits of the function (White, 1991:15). Therefore each and every practitioner's behaviour becomes important for the future of the function and its contribution to organisational performance.

3.5.3.2. Access to management

When the dominant coalition, "… that group of individuals who occupy the top decision-making level of the organisation regardless of status levels" (Hill *et al.*, 1994:217), is convinced of the value of public relations, practitioners could expect access to management and management support to enact the strategic role and contribute to organisational performance.

Access to the dominant coalition would give the practitioner more power as practitioners have access to more strategic information and influential people (Hill *et al.*, 1994:217). However, Yeo and Sriramesh (2009:423) warned that, together with access to the dominant coalition, primacy should also be given to the public relations function. Access to management or the dominant coalition is crucial for the practitioner to act strategically and to contribute to organisational performance (Awad, 1985:25; Grunig, 2001:8; Sweep *et al.*, 1994:327). This access will not only afford the practitioner any influence, but will give him/her the opportunity to act strategically (O'Neil, 2003a:166). The end goal is, however, not to have access to the dominant coalition for the sake of access, but rather to use this access to enact the strategic public relations role (see section 2.2.4.2.1.). Interestingly, it is mooted that public relations consultants in many cases has greater access to the dominant coalition than in-house practitioners (Gupta, 2007: 309).

It is encouraging to note that in many cases practitioners already have access to top management and are therefore empowered (IABC, 2002:7; Moncur, 2006:95).

3.5.3.3. Encroachment and *pigeonholing*

When public relations is not viewed as important or of strategic value by the organisation, and is perceived to share similar skills and tasks with other disciplines, it will lead to encroachment and *pigeonholing* (Lauzen, 1991:546).

Encroachment is seen as the management of public relations by non-public relations professionals of any field, and has been researched extensively (Ehling *et al.*, 1992:359, 363; Grunig *et al.*, 2001:179-180; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211; Lee, 2005:279; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155). Lauzen (1991:245) argues that encroachment is mostly aggressively committed by marketing departments. However, Van Ruler and De Lange (2003:155) disagree and found that encroachment in the Netherlands is done by

various other functions such as general management, marketing, office management, human resources, and even the finance department.

As a result, encroachment can be viewed as a form of discrimination. Grunig *et al.* (2001:180-182) argues that encroachment marginalises public relations as a management and strategic function, which results in stakeholders not being properly represented within the organisation. Thus a lack of appreciation for the contribution of public relations to the organisation (Lee, 2005:279) will limit the contribution of the function to a technical level (Watts, 2006:104). This creates a management *power vacuum*, to which someone from another discipline will step up (Lauzen, 1991:246).

Lee (2005:279) argue that encroachment can take place on three levels:

- first, on an *authoritarian level* where a non-public relations person manages the function;
- second, on a *structural level* where the public relations department reports into another department within the organisation; and
- third, on the *functional level* where other departments expand into public relations activities.

Pigeonholing is a related negative variable influencing the public relations function. This is where practitioners are appointed to positions as token appointments for the organisation to meet quota targets (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:152). In South Africa, this is referred to as affirmative action. In these cases there are no progression opportunities for the practitioner (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:152, 155). In most cases, however, the practitioner seems to be incapable of enacting the applicable managerial or strategist role, and the profession suffers as the practitioner is not contributing to organisational performance.

However, Tindall (2009:445), when studying African-American practitioners in the USA, made the comment, that a visible increase in their participation and presence in the profession could combat stereotyping and pigeonholing.

3.5.3.4. The tolerance by management of diversity

Diversity can be defined in terms of age, race, gender, sexual orientation or any other characteristic.

When an organisation values diversity, it can create *very real payoffs* for the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:133, 136) as diversity can bring new perspectives to strategy formulation

and more creative business solutions (Slater *et al.*, 2008:201). It has also been shown that organisations valuing diversity report a higher return on equity than their matching counterparts (Slater *et al.*, 2008:208), and tend to use two-way symmetrical communication. All this will enable the practitioner to act strategically as a change agent and make a contribution to the performance of the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:130, 133, 136-137).

Slater *et al.* (2008:204) warn though that diversity in an organisation can lead to higher communication costs and must be part of the culture of the organisation, not only a single programme or mere window dressing: "… the costs of diversity are likely to outweigh its benefits when there is only superficial commitment to diversity" (Slater *et al.*, 2008:205).

3.5.3.5. Management variables that may affect the public relations function

Some management variables could severely affect and influence the relationship between the practitioner and his/her manager. A few examples follow below:

- Having a younger manager that possibly better understands the need for communication than an older manager (Le Roux, 2004:36, 44);
- Having a male or female manager, although Grunig *et al.* (2001:240) concluded that practitioners could not decide whether they prefer to work for a male or a female manager; and
- Management taking credit for a job done by the corporate communication practitioner (Le Roux, 2004:37, 43).

3.5.4. Mentorship

Although mentorship and internship are in many cases seen as related due to the similar benefits of greater job opportunities, career advancement, personal goal attainment and job satisfaction it offers practitioners (Gault *et al.*, 2010:86; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:214; Walton, 2009:18), this study differentiates between the two concepts.

Mentoring is seen as providing an advisor or *contextualiser of knowledge* for an employee working within an organisation. Metoring thus encompasses reflection as a key aspect (Dutton, 2003:23-24), while internship is viewed as "… supervised work experience" aimed at students (PRSA, 2007:30). The above definitions indicate two main differences between mentorship and internship:

- first, that an internship can be conducted within a shorter period of time than a mentorship, and
- second, that the different efforts focus on people in different stages of embarking/working towards their careers and career goals.

However, both mentoring and internships focus on career and psychosocial support (ref. Van Emmerik *et al*., 2005: 310).

Mentorship is important not only to enhance the practitioner's career, but also to enhance practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. According to, Pompper and Adams (2006:312, 314) the value of mentoring lies in:

- its supplementation to formal education;
- the validation and empowerment created;
- the image and behavioural guidance given;
- the entry into mentor networks gained by protégés; and
- the experience of benefits that will motivate the practitioner to also mentor at a later stage.

One does, however, need to keep in mind that the mentoring relationship is fragile (Pompper & Adams, 2006:314). To create a successful mentoring relationship, the mentor should be knowledgeable, a role model, a manager, insightful and patient, and the protégé driven, capable, skilful and mature (Pompper & Adams, 2006:311). Interestingly, mentorship does not only have to be done by one person mentoring another. It can also be done via professional bodies guiding practitioners, or by peer contact.

Currently, in South Africa, mentorship programmes are not the norm within organisations. This could be the case as mentorship poses the following challenges:

- Engaging in mentorship would mean that the mentor is comfortable in relinquishing some power to another within the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:298). At this stage in South Africa practitioners seem to hold on to jobs that they have to fight to get and keep, and might not be very keen to pass on information or assist fellow practitioners in their quest for knowledge.
- Mentors do not always have a clear understanding of what practitioners need to learn (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:27).
- Practitioners also tend to move to other professions after a relatively short time in public relations, thereby limiting the value of mentorship (Bonello, 2004).

- To be successful, mentoring should be supported by the organisational culture (Pompper & Adams, 2006:312).

Interestingly, male mentors are seen to provide more direct access to the dominant coalition (Hill *et al.*, 1994:217), which could assist the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

3.5.5. Job Satisfaction

It is possible that a practitioner who experiences job satisfaction will strive to contribute more to organisational performance than a practitioner without job satisfaction.

There are many aspects influencing job satisfaction, which could include, amongst others:

- the available advancement opportunities for the practitioner within the public relations department or organisation;
- fit and reasonable remuneration and benefits according to the practitioner's experience and education;
- flexible hours that could accommodate the practitioner when necessary;
- the lack of a glass ceiling that could keep female or minority practitioners from advancing in their careers; and
- recognition for contributing to organisational performance by top management and even peers.

However, most importantly, Grunig *et al.* (2002:71, 114, 488) found that a participative culture would enhance job satisfaction for the practitioner and simultaneously increase the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. Job satisfaction is also related to whether the practitioner is performing the role which s/he prefers (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:218-219), be it technical, managerial or strategic.

Grunig *et al.* (2002:488) also made a clear distinction between job satisfaction and organisational satisfaction. *Job satisfaction* relates to job complexity and thus the role performed by the practitioner. *Organisational satisfaction* relates to the culture and resulting communication system of the organisation. This study will focus on both job satisfaction and organisational culture (see section 3.5.2.2.), as organisational-level variables. Interestingly Beurer-Zuellig *et al.* (2009:276) found male practitioners significantly more satisfied in their jobs than their female counterparts.

3.5.6. Summary of the Organisational-level Variables

Various variables were identified at the organisational-level that could influence the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

The following table summarises these concepts and constructs:

Table 3.5: Organisational-level variables

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Organisational	Shared expectations	
	Organisational characteristics	• Organisational size and structure • Organisational culture • Organisational politics • Structure and size of the public relations function • The organisation's unique stakeholder environment
	Management variables	• Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation • Access to management • Encroachment and pigeonholing • Management tolerance of diversity • Management variables: o Younger management better understanding the need for communication o Having a male or female direct manager o Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner
	Mentorship	Mentorship and internship
	Job satisfaction	• Advancement opportunities • Remuneration and benefits • Flexible hours • Lack of the *glass ceiling* • Recognition

3.6. INDUSTRY-LEVEL VARIABLES

Industry-level variables pertain to the industry in which the practitioner's employer operates, and not the public relations industry *per se*.

There are various variables within the industry in which practitioners' employers operate, that can influence practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. Moss *et al.* (2000:297, 302) suggested that a competitive and highly regulated industry will, for example, force the practitioner to play a more important and even strategic role. However, practitioners should be able to apply their knowledge to the specific industry and its challenges, which can only be done once the industry is understood by the practitioner (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:4).

Industry-level variables include the history of public relations within the industry and the general industry environment, which includes regulations and stakeholders unique to the industry in which the practitioner is working.

3.6.1. History of Public Relations within the Industry

Each industry in which practitioners' employers operate, is argued to have a specific history of public relations within that industry. For instance, in the mining industry, the practitioner has had to adapt from dealing with only a few stakeholders to managing thousands of stakeholders world wide, of which some are increasingly vocal and active (Jonah, 2001:4). A case in point is the relationships that practitioners have had to build with labour unions. A very active and vocal stakeholder, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) (NUM, 2001), summarises their engagement with mining companies as follows: "These experiences and our proud history of engagement and struggle, … inform our perspective of 'Environmental and Developmental Challenges, Priorities and Concern for a sustainable future' … WE DARE NOT FAIL" (NUM, 2001). Furthermore, ethical and timely investor relations within this industry has proven to positively influence mining company's share price (Jonah, 2001:3, 8, 9).

The historic role that public relations has performed within the industry in which the practitioner's employer operates, can lead to stereotypical thinking of what public relations could, or should achieve within the industry.

3.6.2. Industry Environment

Each industry offers the practitioner unique challenges in terms of the regulatory environment, and the unique landscape of stakeholders (ref. Le Roux, 2005:304-305; Moss *et al.,* 2000:297), which can impact the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

3.6.2.1. Regulatory environment

All industries must adhere to some general regulations. In South Africa, the *King III Report* (which encompasses the *King I* and *King II Reports*) (see section 1.4.1.2.) applies specifically to listed companies, financial institutions, and public sector enterprises. The reports focus on how these organisations should measure and report on their performance in terms of the triple bottom line, as this is crucial for organisational survival (PWC, 2009:2). Therefore practitioners active in such organisations should be aware of and knowledgeable about the Report and its implications for their industries and organisations.

In turn, some regulations and even codes of practice are very specific to certain industries. For example, in the mining industry there are specific health and safety legislation, targets and milestones that should be achieved (AMMSA, 2007). For organisations that want to enhance their commitment to these aspects, a Safety, Health, Environmental and Community (SHEC) benchmarking database and community are available where organisations can compare their results to the rest of the industry to assess their progress (CSMI, 2009).

Furthermore, there is also a Code of Good Practice (or more commonly referred to as the Mining Charter) for the minerals industry setting out targets on aspects such as employment equity, mine community and rural development, housing, general social responsibility, and the like (RSA, 2009:1-32), where the practitioner can play an important role in stakeholder engagement (Kim & Reber, 2008:341). Organisations are furthermore expected to participate in Adult Based Education and Training (ABET) that should strictly speaking be the responsibility of government, in order to better equip employees (AMMSA, 2007; Chamber of Mines, 2008). If practitioners are knowledgeable about these issues in industry, he/she will be able to contribute more to the performance of the organisation. However, ignorance of industry-specific regulations can lead to, although unintended, stakeholder activism, unlawful organisational behaviour or organisational behaviour that damages the reputation of the organisation.

3.6.2.2. Stakeholders unique to the industry

Each industry also has a specific landscape of stakeholders. Compare, for instance, the stakeholders of a financial institution to those of a mining company settled within a rural community. Not only will the stakeholder issues differ, but also the communication and relationship needs of the stakeholders. The practitioner should be able to adapt to these differing challenges and be able to apply their knowledge in not only prioritising stakeholders, but also in building relationships with these diverse stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64-70).

An aspect that links closely with the stakeholder landscape of the specific industry is the degree of uncertainty within the industry. Practitioners will be expected to enact a more senior role in an uncertain or a dynamic environment (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:207; Moss, 2000:3). Specifically in the turbulent South African environment where participatory social responsibility is mandatory, the corporate communication practitioner should be allowed the opportunity to make strategic inputs in the strategy formulation of the organisation (Steyn, 2000c:28). By enacting a strategic role and displaying business and stakeholder expertise, knowledge the practitioner can reinforce and enhance the contribution of the function to organisational excellence, and thus organisational performance (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:17, 87).

Lastly, it should also be mentioned that some industries are known for the type of management style used in the industry. For instance, Le Roux (2004:41) found the banking industry to be a very autocratic environment that could limit the contribution of the practitioner to organisational performance.

Since this study is conducted across industries and the focus is not to determine management styles within the industry but rather the general industry variables that can influence practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. Therefore the focus will not be on determining the management style within different industries. However, for studies focussing on public relations within specific industries, this aspect should be taken into account.

3.6.3. Summary of the Industry-level Variables

The following table provides a summary of the variables on the industry-level according to the main constructs and concepts:

Table 3.6: Industry-level variables

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Industry	History	Historic role of public relations in the industry
	Industry environment	• Industry-specific regulations such as BEE charters, policies, regulations, and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists

3.7. COUNTRY-LEVEL VARIABLES

There are various variables emenating from the country in which the practitioner operates that could influence their contribution to organisational performance. Until fairly recently, public relations knowledge has been dominated by USA research and literature, with little research done in other countries, and with little empirical evidence on the nature of public relations in various other countries (Sriramesh, 2003a:xxv). However, knowledge on public relations in a variety of different countries is needed to understand the discipline better and to define it more accurately. The *West is Best*-mentality (Sriramesh, 2006) has slowly, but surely become obsolete.

To understand how corporate communication can contribute to organisational performance, it is therefore necessary to take into account the variables at country-level, and even to adapt lessons from countries other than South Africa to this specific environment (ref. Bentele, 2004:492; Sriramesh, 2003a:xxv). Therefore the political ideology, economic system, degree of activism, culture, level of development, and the media systems and media environment of the country, should be taken into account when considering variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance (Grunig, 2001:19; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:2). These aspects, however, should not necessarily be seen as negative

influences on the function, because they can serve as stimuli to develop and grow public relations, as rightly pointed out by L'Etang (2004:223).

Some authors argue that the forementioned five country-related variables can be collapsed into three main variables, namely the infrastructure of the country; societal culture; and media environment (ref. Sriramesh & Verčič, in Molleda & Suárez, 2005:22). Most importantly, it should be kept in mind that countries differ from one another on various levels – whether five or three variables are selected – and that these variables should be considered when applying lessons learned from other countries.

To ensure a thorough consideration of the South African country variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, the five variables pertaining to country-level influences will be further discussed.

3.7.1. Political Ideology

Political ideology stands central as to how a country is governed and therefore directly influences democratisation, the use of new technologies; economic development and decision-making; and the social development (Sriramesh, 2003a:xxvi-xxvii; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:3). The political system determines the importance of public opinion, which directly influences the practice of public relations (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:3). According to these authors (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:5) " … the Western definition of public relations assumes a democratic political structure in which competing groups seek legitimacy and power through public opinion and elections, which is not always the norm in many parts of the world".

An image study of public relations in German-speaking countries commissioned by the DPRG (German Public Relations Association), and conducted during April and May 2003 found that, although people were familiar with the term *public relations* and preferred to use it (Bentele & Junghänel, 2004:162; Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2003:2; Nessmann, 1995:151; Valin, 2004), most respondents saw public relations as a form of journalism or advertising, and 54% saw public relations as being similar to propaganda (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2003:2-3). On the one hand, some of these findings could be explained by taking into account the *spin* applied during the 2002 German elections and the 2002 Hunzinger Case in which the minister of defence – Rudolf Scharping – resigned as he was suspected of taking advantages from a lobbyist and his behaviour was evaluated as being typical of public relations actions (Bentele & Junghänel, 2004:164; Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2003:7).

Another interesting finding is that the German police, the German Federal Armed Forces, broadcasters (radio and television), newspapers, the Internet and journalists in Germany, were all much more trusted than public relations practitioners (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2003:5-6).

On the other hand, it was found that the close relationship between public relations and the government in the Netherlands has added to the growth of the function. Van Ruler (2004b:274) argues that the Government Commission on the Future of Governmental Communication Management stated in 2001 that the communication function should be part of organisational decision-making. The statement also favours the counselling and coaching public relations roles identified in Europe.

South Africa faces a unique political ideology with the major political changes in the recent years – from political prisoners being released, to a new, democratically elected government lead by a political party previously banned, to the formation of strong opposition parties. Although the country has always been labelled as democratic, the voice of the people has now become even more important (ref. Infoplease, 2007). The previous regime created a specific imbalance of power, controlling access to education, business and other opportunities, which the new government, after almost 15 years of active effort, has not been able to rectify. South Africa is still in a transition phase, but this phase differs from those of other countries in transition, such as the previous Eastern Block European countries. These countries find themselves in a political phase of transition where the transition is mostly from a Communist to a Democratic political system. The legacy these countries have to deal with focuses mostly on a political agenda. In South Africa, however, there is still the effect of years of racial discrimination and racism that is still rife in many instances. The ANC government has the task to address and correct these problems, while and as the political sphere changes.

Against this background the practitioner has to prioritise and engage with stakeholders, while still expected to be sensitive to and treat all stakeholders equally.

3.7.2. Economic System

The economic system includes the development of the country's economy, which directly impacts on poverty and literacy, communications infrastructure, and organisational growth (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:6). Developed market economies with high literacy rates, developed infrastructure and economic growth will favour strategic public relations more than

developing economics (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:6), as there is room in such an economy to allow for technical, managerial, and strategic public relations activities to take place.

The South African economy is highly developed in some areas and in others not developed at all (Infoplease, 2007). For instance, the unemployment rate in South Africa was 23% in 2008 (Stats SA, 2008) and therefore the focus in the economy is to create growth and create jobs (Anon, 2010a). One can therefore argue that, in the developed areas of the economy, there will be more room for technical, managerial and strategic public relations, but not necessarily in the less developed areas of the economy.

In South Africa a *burden* is placed on private organisations to support social and economic upliftment, as the government is not able to address the backlog created over years, without assistance. Most organisations see this expectation of government as part of their social responsibility as good corporate citizens. However, it still takes money from the total budget of the organisation, which becomes challenging when an economic recession is on the cards. The South African economy provides some opportunities for entrepreneurs, but competition is very stiff and the challenge remains to keep organisations viable. Therefore, specifically in challenging economic times, public relations budgets, along with other departments' budgets, will be cut, thereby limiting strategic activity.

One also needs to keep in mind that the political and economic development of a country is closely related. Venter (2006:50) argues that the measure to which the institutions of a country is changed and reinforced after political and economic change will influence the long-term economic success of a country. Specifically in South Africa, there are two laws that are politically motivated and that impact on the economy:

- The Employment Equity Act (55/1998) forced the workplace to reflect the population demographics and how to correct this through affirmative action. The act states that no person's career should be limited; however, there are quotas in certain industries that must be achieved. The act thus wants to a growth strategy, tapping into the country's previously undeveloped economic potential.
- The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) (53/2003) provides a balanced scorecard on which companies need to show their progress. This scorecard includes aspects such as empowerment through ownership and control of enterprises and assets; representative management at senior level; human-resource development and employment equity, and indirect empowerment through preferential procurement, enterprise development and corporate social investment.

In reply to the pressure to align itself with employment equity and black-based economic empowerment to ensure future growth, the public relations industry has had to sign and abide by the MAC Charter (see section 1.3.2.4.).

In summary, the South African economic and political landscape proves to be unique and offers specific challenges to its public relations practitioners.

3.7.3. Degree of Activism

The *degree of activism* relates to the extent of pressure that organisations face from activists[15]. The extent of pressure that activists can put on organisations is in turn directly influenced by what is accepted within the political system of the country and the economic development of the country (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:6, 7; ref. Guiniven, 2002:393).

Venter (2006:55) argues that organised labour in South Africa was so strong that it initiated socio-economic change, which influenced the South African economic landscape dramatically (ref. NUM, 2001). Specifically the strikes and political activity of COSATU contributed greatly to the changes of 1994 and thereafter (Venter, 2006:60). This implies that labour helped shift the socio-economic system towards a more acceptable option for all citizens. It should be kept in mind that there was a close relationship between the labour movement and certain political parties. COSATU representatives, for instance, were rewarded with government positions and a labour law that encouraged union activity after 1994 (Venter, 2006:61). Venter (2006:62) further argues that "South Africa can expect a continuing struggle for control as labour, management, and government solidify their power bases in the post-revolutionary period".

Human rights have also come to the fore in South Africa. The country has one of the most progressive constitutions in terms of human rights protection, namely the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996. Human rights have also lead to a strong anti-discrimination culture in South Africa (ref. Infoplease, 2007), such as the quest to eliminate discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS (DOH, 2006:5). Currently there are more than 5 million HIV infected individuals in South Africa and it is estimated that almost 20% of the

[15] Activists can be referred to as groups that are vocal and/or through action put pressure on the organisation for a certain cause. The groups aims to exert control on the organisation with regards to the specific cause (Steyn & Puth, 2000:200).

economically active population (15-49 year olds) are infected, which has serious implications for the economy. It has been estimated that the HIV/AIDS pandemic will cost South Africa as much as 17% in GDP growth by 2010 and will severely impact on the economy and social structures (UN AIDS, 2008; WHO, 2010).

The impact on and challenges for public relations therefore cannot be denied. Public relations are often faced with the reality of representing both sides (the activist movement and the organisation) at the same time (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:7) when performing the boundary-spanning role.

South Africa is therefore unique in that its activists are very vocal and active in focussing on the upholding of their human rights. Specifically in South Africa, activists need not neccesarily be technologically advanced in order to make their voices heard. Furthermore, activistic activity is also not limited to the more affluent groups, but in many cases focused on the lower economic groups, forcing the practitioner to be able to deal with all levels of society.

3.7.4. Culture

Culture, as a country variable influencing the development of public relations, is related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance; social mobility; collectivism; masculinity-femininity; uncertainty avoidance; and long-term orientation (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:9-10). Both Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a:2) as well as Nessmann (1995:154) argue that culture has a big influence on the practice of public relations. "Logically, culture should affect public relations, as public relations helps alter culture" (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:7).

South Africa offers a unique cultural environment. To partly explain the diversity, one only has to take into account that the country has 11 official languages (Anon, 2010b). All persons are obviously not fluent in all the languages, and there is not even one *lingua franca* that all can speak, as some people, although they can speak more than two languages, are not fluent in what is considered to be the *business language* in South Africa, namely English.

Compare this to a country such as Switzerland where there are four national languages: German, French, Italian and Roman, and 75 other dialects spoken, whilst the education and literacy rate are very high (Ambülh, 2000:1, 4; Röttger, 2004:245). Therefore public relations practitioners can use a single language to communicate, and make extensive use of

technology such as the Internet and e-based communication channels to do so (Ambülh, 2000:10; Röttger, 2004:438).

South African organisations have had to embrace a culture of transformation and diversity since 1994 (Naudé & Le Roux, 2005:8). The cultural landscape does, however, not change that quickly as culture refers to, among other aspects, deeply-held beliefs. Therefore, some cultural elements such as female roles stereotyped as subservient to male roles, still remains (Naudé & Le Roux, 2005:6).

This implies that the practitioner has to be a person who is sensitive to cultural differences, and someone who has the ability to interact successfully with all cultures, preferably in more than one official language (refer to sections 3.4.2.1. and 3.5.2.2.).

3.7.5. Level of Development

The level of development in each country is influenced by aspects such as democratisation, new technologies, and education (Sriramesh, 2003a:xxvi-xxvii).

Some people in South African are highly educated and developed, while large sections of the population are still seriously underdeveloped. This leads to South Africa being seen as a country with both first-world and third-world economic and development elements that the organisation needs to negotiate in order to survive. For example, literacy levels in South Africa are still very low (Van Rooyen, 2008) as education is in transition in order to find a model where all can be accommodated and receive equal education (Infoplease, 2007).

The combination of a lack of education, employment and thus a lack of general development, leads to a situation where crime is rife and not under control. South Africa's reported murder rate is the sixth highest in the world (Jacobs, 2008) and corruption in government is also rife (Business Anti-Corruption Portal, 2009).

In addition South Africans experience low job security, as was highlighted by the actions of ESKOM workers (Macharia, 2009). The low job security can be attributed to many lay-offs in various industries, the current economic climate, and the slowing economic growth rate in the country (Motlanthe, 2009).

From the above, it is clear that the level of development in South Africa provides specific challenges to the public relations function that needs to be negotiated in order to create and

maintain stakeholder relationships, though which practitioners could contribute to organisational performation.

3.7.6. Media System and Media Environment

The media system and media environment in each country directly influence the public relations function as the public relations practitioner needs to understand who controls the media and to what extent the control is exercised (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:13). In all cases, media ownership does not relate directly to media control (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:14). In South Africa the main three television channels, SABC 1, SABC 2 and SABC 3, are still owned by government, with many South Africans believing that these media are used for political propaganda. Satellite television has now become available to the more affluent and local or community radio stations have been created by communities to serve their specific interests.

In many cases reaching the media is limited due to a lack of infrastructure, which limits media outreach in rural or vast areas (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:15). Within rural communities, however, there are strong communication networks through which community leaders, unions or political parties communicate with members. Therefore, the situation in South Africa differs from the suggestion of Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a:16-17) that only those people with access to the media can oppose organisational points of view. Through the informal communication channels (such as the grapevine) in South Africa, information are distributed among communities without extensive media access and they also participate in activist activities.

There are also bodies such as the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) that guard against new media legislation that could negatively influence the flow of information or freedom of speech (ref. SANEF, 2009:1).

Within this unique media environment, the practitioner needs to understand the best channel to select in order to communicate with their stakeholders.

3.7.7. Summary of Country-level variables

The following table provides a summary of the country-level variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance as pertaining to the South African environment and identified in literature.

Table 3.7: Country-level variables

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Country	• Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Cultural system • Level of development • Media system	• Crime • Corruption • Activist publics • BEE • Experience of working in the South African environment • Literacy levels • Cultural sensitivity • Media legislation • Job security • Social responsibility

3.8. PROFESSIONAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

Professional-level variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance relate directly to the public relations discipline or profession. The professional public relations legacy indicates that people have a certain image of the profession owing to its history of using propaganda and portraying unethical behaviour. The activities and influences of the profession are futhermore not always clearly spelled out, which leads to a lack of a clear definition of the function, thereby possibly relating to the slow growing body of knowledge of the field of public relations outside of the USA.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the practitioner and professional bodies prove the importance of the function and improve its standing in the business environment. This can be done through educating management; advocating the function; practitioners showing their

worth through research; and being visible and proactive. Professional bodies also have a role to play in gaining recognition for the function.

Each variable pertaining to the professional-level will now be discussed.

3.8.1. Professional Legacy

The negative view of the function owing to the historic use of propaganda, *spin doctoring* and the like can be described as the professional legacy of the function of public relations (ref. Jonah, 2001:1-12). This legacy creates expectations of what the practitioner *should* be doing, according to what was done in the past. Examples of these issues that can be cited as still affecting the standing of the public relations profession, include the following incidents:

- Germany, where the reputation of the function was damaged due to the unethical conduct of public practitioners in the political environment (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2003:2; Pitzer 2003), and
- Switzerland where, with the fall of Rikta, a large Swedish public relations organisation, the reputation of the profession was damaged through unethical behaviour (Larsson, 2007:223-224), whilst working on the Swedish governmental South Africa campaign.

The practitioner therefore has to actively be aware and educate management on the *new* focus of public relations on relationship-building through striving towards two-way symmetrical communication, as well as the contribution that the function can make to organisational performance (see sections 1.4., 2.2.2.3. and 2.2.4.1.).

3.8.2. Lack of a Clear Definition

Even in the 1980s authors such as Awad (1985:45) suggested that a common and general accepted definition of public relations was needed. Kruckeberg (1996:21), Nessmann (1995:3) and Spicer (1997:53) added that the lack of a clear definition of corporate communication and viewing corporate communication as part of the marketing function limited strategic role-playing, and therefore the contribution of the profession to organisational performance. A symptom of the lack of a clear definition can be seen in the terms used to describe the function. Some practitioners refer to *public relations*, while others refer to *corporate communication*. In Europe, for instance, it was found that problems in translating the term were guiding the development process of the discipline (Verčič *et al.*,

2001:376). In this instance, European practitioners tend to rather use the term *communication management* to focus on the main concept of communication (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:241). Even in South Africa there is no consensus on the term to describe the function.

Rensburg (2002:6) agrees that a clear definition of the discipline is needed, but questions whether it is possible to develop one globally standardised definition as she acknowledges the differences in the practice between developed and developing countries.

The lack of a clear definition can also be attributed to the lack of a globally agreed body of knowledge on public relations. However, Van Ruler (2004a:123) argues that a clear definition of the discipline does not need to stop practitioners from performing strategic manager and consultant roles, as they do in the Netherlands (Van Ruler, 2004a:123).

3.8.3. Lack of a Body of Knowledge

A comprehensive international body of knowledge on public relations is needed to support the practice and lead it to professionalism (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63; Watts, 2006:103). Sriramesh and Verčič (2003b:xxiii) added that public relations practitioners need a body of knowledge to *fall back on* and enlarge their knowledge of the field. This motivation also lead to the writing and publication of the *Handbook of Public Relations* by these authors. They gave the following motivation for writing the book: ”We hope that in taking such an approach, this book lays the foundation for establishing a holistic body of knowledge based on a comprehensive conceptual framework” (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003b:xxiii). Rensburg (2002:6) argues that such contributions to the body of knowledge, especially from countries other than the USA and the United Kingdom, are of utmost importance to the function.

Many efforts have been made to accrue a body of knowledge. The IPR’s Commission on International Public Relations (USA), for instance, tried to catalogue global literature on public relations. The United Kingdom have also developed and catalogued their body of knowledge (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63). Similarly, academics formed the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:297-298), which focuses on defining the function and collating a body of knowledge on public relations in Europe (the EBOK project) (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:298; Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:166).

Information is, however, still not globally available for many individual countries, due to various reasons. One such reason could be a lack of research funding. More importantly, Raupp and Van Ruler (2006:24-25) delivered sharp criticism in terms of the lack of research funding for communication; the fact that a coherent body of knowledge is not being developed; and better coordination between senior researchers is achieved. According to Raupp and Van Ruler (2006:24) therefore "… it is impossible to talk about a matured scientific discipline yet". This leads to the knowledge currently available being dominated by Western thought, even though the researchers tried to be objective in their work (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:121). However, researchers have acknowledged that the mainstream research is not always directly applicable in other societies and organisations (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:121).

The body of knowledge should contain more than craft (technical) information to contribute to the development and advancement of the function (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:13). Furthermore, accurate public relations information on the profession and trends in the profession are needed. Currently this type of information is not available per country (O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:34). However, the Global Alliance (registered in the United Kingdom, but active globally) has done much work in trying to make more such information available. It is difficult to obtain accurate information on the function due to the fact that professional membership is voluntary and it is therefore difficult to make contact with practitioners to obtain such information.

The other argument to consider is that, once such a body of knowledge has been established, one can question whether it will be used by academics and practitioners alike. Many practitioners tend not to use academic / scientific knowledge in their work and rather rely on intuitive knowledge as it is argued that research is based on academic understanding and not conducive to the practice (Cornelissen, 2000:315-316).

Important to note is that practitioners use the knowledge to their disposal in different ways (Cornelissen, 2000:316-322):

- Information is gained to be used in the short term on a specific problem, making it an instrumental application of knowledge.
- Knowledge is used conceptually in the long term for generalisations and to define concepts.
- Few practitioners use information according to the translation model where knowledge is actively shaped, translated and applied to the practitioners' current context.

In South Africa there is a force to increase the body of knowledge on public relations which is driven by the tertiary institutions (see section 1.3.2.2.). This is positive as it shows that, as Grunig (2001:1-19) argued, the public relations body of knowledge is slowly growing.

3.8.4. Showing the Importance of Communication

Owing to aspects such as, but not limited to, the legacy of public relations and the lack of a clear definition and body of knowledge, there is a lack of professional recognition for the public relations function. This lack of recognition could be negated by showing the importance of communication to organisational performance through advocating, defending and educating management on public relations, and doing public relations research, with the practitioner being visible in the organisation and being seen to be proactive.

3.8.4.1. Advocating, defending and educating management on public relations

Practitioners must acknowledge their role to actively educate management and even advocate the contribution of public relations to the organisation.

In many cases practitioners expect the professional bodies to perform this role. For instance, USA practitioners expect PRSA and other professional organisations to work towards educating CEOs on the value of public relations (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:289). Although this is an aspect that professional bodies could add to their mandate, it would still be difficult for them to access all organisations to enlighten management on the role of public relations. The practitioner is actually in the ideal situation, having access to management, and should use opportunities to advocate, educate and defend the profession.

The practitioner should also be attentive to their own actions in proving their worth to the organisation as this could influence management's view of the corporate communication function, and the practitioner's chances to contribute to organisational performance. Various authors suggest that corporate communication practitioners often downplay the function (Spicer, 1997:36; Van Ruler, 1997:252). In some cases, this is due to a lack of education (Nessmann, 1995:3). Hence the impression is created that only technical skill and a certain personality are needed to be excellent at corporate communication.

3.8.4.2. Doing public relations research

Another method of showing the value of public relations and gaining credibility is to measure the outcomes and outputs of the function (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:230, 319; Gupta, 2007:311; Taff, 2003:11). Most practitioners inhibit their own work by not measuring the results of their work or only measuring technical outputs such as media space; the number of people attending a conference; through informal interviews; anecdotal feedback; and comments from management and the grapevine. They do not focus on awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders – the outcomes that are important (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001:7; Woodall & Smith, 2003:19-20).

Standardised measurement will add to the credibility of the function (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:319). However, although research has produced many standardised measurement instruments that practitioners could use, practitioners do not seem willing or able to implement scientific measurement tools (Moncur, 2006:98).

3.8.4.3. Being visible in the organisation

By being visible in the organisation, being available for counsel (Bhimani, 1995:275), and making their efforts known to colleagues and management, can assist practitioners in gaining more acknowledgement within the organisation. Lubbe (1994:27) specifically refer to the prominence of a practitioner within the organisation, and that their prominence would directly influence their effectiveness and therefore their contribution to organisational performance. According to Van Ruler and De Lange (2003:155) a lack of visibility in the organisation will lead to encroachment on the public relations function.

3.8.4.4. Being proactive

Proactive practitioners who anticipate and inform management of potential stakeholder or issue related problems will gain respect in the organisation. This type of action implies that the practitioner should do environmental scanning and act strategically. As discussed in section 2.2.4.2.1., functioning strategically and thus proactively, will allow the practitioner to contribute more to organisational performance (Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-19).

3.8.5. Role of Professional Bodies

Professional bodies in general focus on providing practitioners with information and standardised education; bringing research closer to practice; implementing and managing accreditation and, generally, through their existence and actions enhance the profession by creating a single voice for the discipline (Euprera, 2008; Inter-comm, 2005).

3.8.5.1. Membership of professional bodies

The potential positive impact of professional bodies is hampered by limited membership numbers. According to O'Connor and Falconi (2003:2) only one twelfth of practitioners actually belong to a professional body (see sections 1.2.1.3. and 1.3.1.1.).

In other cases, owing to social and political change, professional bodies could only be established in the past few years (ref. APRA, 2004). In addition, in most countries, similar to South Africa, membership of the professional bodies is voluntary (L'Etang, 2004:221; Motion & Leitch, 2005:49; Nessmann, 2004:17; O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:21; PRIA, 2008).

Voluntary membership, resulting in limited membership numbers, poses two main problems:

- First, most practitioners practise the function without any commitment to, or alliance with a professional body and community, thereby limiting the role that the professional body can play in professionalising the function.
- Second, owing to the fact that all practitioners cannot be listed, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the industry through research, as is the case, for instance, in Italy (O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:21; Falconi & Kodilja, 2004:228, 234). Ambülh (2000:6) adds that, "However, most PR people are badly organized in trade associations, so the discrepancy between the statistical data of this association and the expert's estimations on the whole PR industry is not surprising".

3.8.5.2. Enhancing recognition for the function

It is expected of professional bodies to enhance the recognition of the public relations function (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:179). The official South Africal professional body, PRISA, has only been in existence for 50 years (Lubbe & Puth, 2002:5) and the IABC South Africa Chapter was only established in 1991 (IABC, 2009b), limiting the time available to create recognition for the function. Recognition would, however, assist practitioners to contribute

more to organisational performance as they would be able to become part of decision-making teams and act as counsel (Lim, 2008).

It is thought that professional bodies should create recognition for the function by the following actions:

- Keeping the practitioner informed of new developments. Professional bodies should take into account the regulatory environments affecting public relations practices and share information globally to gain best-practice information (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:93; O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:2). Many also argue that the professional bodies in South Africa should work towards assisting practitioners in understanding and overcoming country-specific and individual variables, in order to enhance practitioners' business knowledge (Valin, 2004; Van Ruler, 1997:257, 260).
- The professional body itself should be known and recognised within business to add validity to practitioner accreditation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:317). Although both PRISA and the IABC offer accreditation, this accreditation is not acknowledged in business as the two organisations themselves are not that well known.
- The professional body should also attempt some accreditation for and educational standards within the profession.

Even having the largest European professional body, such as in Sweden, does not guarantee a good reputation for the function. In the *Financial Times* of 30 October 2001, strong critique on the professional bodies, the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) and Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), was delivered where it was stated that these bodies did not enhance the standing of the profession (Davis, 2004:190).

In spite of this, practitioners themselves also have to take responsibility to gain recognition for their performance or lack thereof, and for their function (Gupta, 2007:311).

3.8.5.3. Setting standards for education and required skills sets

Providing a standard for practitioner skills will also be beneficial to the profession and limit problems with regard to the vague view of the function and standardising the shared expectations between the organisation and practitioner. The fact that the discipline also spans many academic disciplines does not make standardising education any easier (Watts, 2006:104). Professional bodies are seen to be in a prime position to push for educational standards as both lecturers and practitioners should ideally be members of the organisation and share knowledge through their membership of the professional body (Ferreira & Verwey,

2004:108). The professional body can also enforce CPD training to up-skill practitioners already in the practice.

Many professional bodies have moved toward the creation of a set skills set or a set educational framework for practitioners:

- In the UK, Inter-Comm, has suggested a skills matrix for internal communication practitioners (Thatcher & Shaw, 2005:27; see section 3.4.2.1.). The Government Communication Network (GCN) of the UK has also done a similar exercise for government communicators (GCN, 2005).
- The International Corporate Communication Association (IPRA) – which represents 92 countries -- set out guidelines for education and has published various *Gold Papers* dealing with education, recommending a model of core curricula (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94).
- In the US, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) has also provided some educational standards to be followed (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63).
- The Swiss Public Relations Institute (SPRI) (a foundation of the Swiss Public Relations Society (SPRG)) set up public relations courses at the Universities of Berne, Freibourgh, Lugano, and Zurich. An MBA course for public relations practitioners is also offered at the universities of Lugano and Sankt Gallen. Furthermore, the SPRG and the Swiss Association for Internal Communication (SVIK) regularly organise seminars for members and other people working in the public relations industry (Ambülh, 2000:8; Röttger, 2004:435).
- In South Africa, PRISA, has developed a course with curricula that is used to train corporate communication professionals.

However, there is not yet an agreed-upon education framework. It is thus an urgent need for professional bodies, both locally and internationally, to work towards a standard core curriculum for practitioners.

One could ask whether standarised education would be sufficient to gain recognition for the function. In Austria it was found that giving practitioners basic education, and then in-depth training for additional on-the-job qualifications for professionals, lead to organisations now demanding more educated public relations practitioners (Nessmann, 2004:19, 20).

Specifically in South Africa there is also not an agreed standard for public relations education at universities and other educaitonal institutions. For instance, South African research has

shown that corporate communication education had to be taught within the Faculty of Management Sciences (Groenewald, 1998b:19). However, as pointed out in section 1.3.2.2., there is only one South African university where this is the case.

3.8.5.4. Accreditation of the function

Many practitioners and academics believe that accreditation of the public relations practitioner would gain acknowledgement for the function. As mentioned above, the lack of recognition of the professional bodies limits the influence of available accreditation.

Interestingly even in countries where strict licensing and thus membership are required, such as Brazil, it was found that licensing eliminates many unwanted practitioners, but that many people continue to practice the function illegally (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:273, 274, 276, 277). The situation in Brazil has taught practitioners that even though the function is licensed, it is only recognised when the required competencies are demonstrated. Furthermore, for licensing to be effective, it needs to be maintained, well regulated, and managed to be effective (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003:274, 278).

In the hope that professional status would add to the recognition of the function (APRA, 2004), it is important to note that some of the developing countries still do not have professional public relations bodies or a set code of ethics to which to adhere, as is the case in Malta (Bonello, 2004), or have no formal professional accreditation process, as in Asia (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008:94-114). In other countries or regions, public relations practitioners are represented by national associations. However, some countries do not have such an association as yet (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005b:297).

O'Connor and Falconi (2003:35) added that the general standardisation of the practice could assist in improving the performance of the function, but argued that standardisation across countries would not be possible. The authors did, however, state that general global principles could be set, with the understanding that it should be uniquely applied to each local setting.

One suggestion to consider is the system used by the Austrian Public Relations Association (PRVA), where the association selects its members – thus all public relations practitioners are not members of PRVA. This implies that practitioners need to obtain high standards of work to become part of the association (Nessmann, 2004:16). This might be a different kind of accreditation as what is normally suggested by associations.

The IPR has, however, done much to promote and professionalise the profession. The IPR is also closely involved with CERP (European Public Relations Confederation) and the Global Alliance (IRP, 2004:4), ensuring that they stay in touch with international trends. A CPD Scheme was created in 1999 and the first *Accredited Practitioner* was awarded in 2003 (IPR, 2004:2). Koper (2004:479), however, argues that practitioners have limited time and funds to spend on the CPD Scheme, which is a concern as the technology used in the public relations arena, develops so rapidly.

The IPR took the next step – to obtain Royal Chartered Status. Chartered status is unique to the UK and follows similar traditions in France, Italy and other European countries (Tobin, 2004:57) were a profession is acknowledged in such a way. Chartered status ensures that those who obtain it, have a set of skills and knowledge as specified by the Royal Chartered Status. It is not so easy for a discipline to obtain chartered status as the industry needs to prove itself to be mature by having a critical mass of practitioners holding tertiary vocational qualifications, as well as having sufficient economic strength as an industry (Tobin 2004:57).

Tobin (2004:56-64), in his article titled *Can the professionalisation of the UK public relations industry make it more trustworthy?* questions whether the Royal Chartered Status could assist the practitioner. Chartered status would endorse professionalism of the industry and practitioners as it standardises skills and knowledge (Tobin, 2004:62). Some may also argue that the role of the practitioner is determined by the status of the profession. However, the UK organisations do not require chartered status for a practitioner to obtain a position (Tobin, 2004:57, 59).

Further, chartered status, which is difficult to obtain, does not guarantee pubic trust (Tobin, 2004:56-64). As he states, “Clearly there is no quick fix associated with building trust” (Tobin 2004:63). As Tobin (2004:62) argued, “… a lot hinges on the willingness of organisations and their leaders to accept such change”. It is also recommended that business leaders must be educated on the importance and practice of public relations (Tobin, 2004:63). Mainly though, Royal Chartered Status would give the IPR self-regulation, which can assist with professional consistency and transparency in the discipline (Tobin, 2004:58).

L’Etang (2004:221), however, argues that a small group of practitioners was concerned with professional status to establish social legitimacy and social respectability. According to this author, many practitioners are of the opinion that they do not need professional status to conduct their work.

The use of Royal Chartered Status and the results thereof will be guidance for the rest of the public relations world. Koper (2004:483) argues that the practice is becoming more professional, recognition is growing, and the *glass ceiling* is disappearing. Yet education, more investment and accurate statistics on the profession are needed.

3.8.5.5. Professionalisation of the function

It is argued that professionalisation of the function would eliminate many of the problems experienced by practitioners working in the public relations profession. Professionalisation would ensure a common identity, and also a set of shared values and responsibilities that are visible. Nielsen (2006:1, 5) stated the following:

> *… the standing and reputation of our own profession could benefit from a coming together around a shared set of values that speak about what we believe our responsibilities are and what we hold as important about what we do … Maybe this takes the form of a creed or statement of beliefs about what we value and the responsibilities we believe we own. And, I see this as something very different than a code of ethics.*

Especially in a function where the greater society is influenced by the discipline, and where the discipline can make a contribution to the greater society, it is important that the function adheres to professional values (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63; Janssen *et al.* in Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:169).

Professionalisation could also assist the practitioner in creating shared expectations with management as it shows the mastery of skills and effectiveness while holding certain values (Steiner, 2001:155).

There are, however, challenges to overcome for the discipline to be acknowledged as a profession (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63). Falconi (2006:2) agrees by stating that: "… being big does not make public relations a profession". The criteria for the public relations function to be recognised as a profession, include the following:

- A research-based body of knowledge should be created for public relations (Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63; Raupp & Van Ruler, 2006:18), which should also include best practice (Sallot, 2005:81). This would lead to receiving greater research grants and coordination among researchers (Raupp & Van Ruler, 2006:25). It should also include public relations values (Nielsen, 2006:5) that focus on placing the needs of

society before those of the public relations officer (Grunig, 2006a:3; Leeper & Leeper, 2005:646).

- Public relations must be measured in the same way as other professions are, which includes having more than an impact on the budget and being accountable to society (Falconi, 2006:2).
- The function must be able to be managed scientifically (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:170).
- A code of ethics or a formal statement of conduct or standards and guidelines of behaviour should be adapted and actively applied to become a profession and create a good reputation for the profession (Seeger *et al.*, 2005a:138-139). According to Seeger *et al.* (2005a:139), "Ethical codes have helped public relations practitioners clarify professional expectations, maintain higher standards of professional conduct, and, in general, elevate the reputation of the profession". The problem with a more general and global code is that it might be seen as too vague and therefore of limited value (Seeger *et al.*, 2005b:141-142).

Professionalisation of the function can, however, not be blindly accepted as the golden key that would unlock the discipline of the contribution of public relations to organisational performance. Steyn (2003a:10) argues that one should consider professionalisation critically.

However, Steyn (2004:61) argues that the:

> *… [the] 'lack of professionalism' in PR can be regarded as its strength because it [the practitioner] must be able to appreciate multiple viewpoints, work with multiple stakeholders, be flexible and pragmatic, take risks and be innovative to perform strategically …. The uniformity of, and conformity of behaviours required by professionalism could reduce the value of the function to management.*

Rensburg (2002:12) adds that one should keep in mind that public relations is not only a profession on its own, but also functions as part of other professions – although it is not a subset of another field (Steyn, 2004:61). Steiner (2001:150) agrees with this argument by stating that:

> *… professionalism marked by narrowly defined specialist parameters bodes ill for corporate communication because it marks a narrowing of vision and interest, just when corporate communication has moved beyond the narrow roles of corporate publicity and corporate writing and just when managers are beginning to believe that communication is a whole-of-enterprise responsibility.*

Therefore there is a real threat that professionalisation could limit public relations and limit the complexity and diversity of its strategy (Steyn, 2004:62).

Hodges (2006:81-82) argues that professionalisation of the function is concerned with a structured approach of establishing professional bodies and gaining recognition only within the private sector, without acknowledging the need to adapt to unique situations in each country. Furthermore, the conduct of each practitioner will also influence the professional status (Reynolds, 2005:5).

Whether one argues for or against the professionalisation of the public relations function, it is important to note that this will not be an easy process. Even in developed countries such as in Europe, where there has been a strong move towards professionalisation, the discipline is still far from achieving professional status (Van Ruler *et al.*, 2001:166). As Leeper and Leeper (2005:645) argued, "… professions still dominate our world."

In Africa most countries have their own public relations associations. In an effort to move toward professionalisation, the Federation of African Public Relations Associations (FAPRA) has tried to provide a continental home for all the African public relations associations (Steyn, 2005b:15-16) to promote a unique African view of public relations. Yet, even though FAPRA has tried to discuss African public relations at various conferences, they experience a lack of resources, communication difficulties, and a lack of general professional direction in the field, which limits their contribution to professionalising the function (Steyn, 2005b:15-16).

3.8.5.6. Enforcing ethical practice

In the article *The public relations practitioner's role in practicing strategic ethics*, it was argued that the practitioner would act more ethical if s/he practised strategic public relations (Kruckeberg, 2000a:35-39). Public relations is furthermore a function that is defined according to its ethical standards and it can be argued that professional bodies that can enforce ethical practice will assist in the function becoming more professional.

In the ethical codes of the professional bodies, aimed at enhancing the reputation of the profession, the associations try to encourage ethical practice. The professional bodies do not have a legal right to enforce these codes, but according to Motion and Leitch (2005:50) practitioners who are accused of misconduct "… avoid censure by resigning …" from the professional organisation.

An interesting action taken by the professional bodies of Australia and New Zealand is that consultancies are charged with responsibility to act ethically (there is a great emphasis on ethical behaviour), and thereby the consultancies are responsible to professionalise the function and build organisational reputation (Motion & Leitch, 2005:50). Only agencies that adhere to these codes may be added to the directory of consultancies, which is mostly used, providing an incentive for agencies to adhere to these standards (Motion & Leitch, 2005:51). The list, however, "… functions as a trade directory rather than as a mark of professionalism" (Motion & Leitch, 2005:51).

The IABC is also active in these countries but does not offer accreditation or act on disciplinary procedures (Motion & Leitch, 2005:50). Previously, senior practitioners resisted taking accreditation examinations, but this is now, together with the move towards professionalisation, becoming more acceptable (Motion & Leitch, 2005:50).

In South Africa, both the IABC and PRISA members must adhere to an ethical code of these organisations. Recently, the MAC Charter was signed by both the communication-professional bodies IABC and PRISA. This charter commits to inclusivity and diversity, valuing the soul of the nation, respects human dignity and is responsible for specifically the upliftment of historically disadvantaged people (Skinner *et al.*, 2007:24; see section 1.3.2.4. and 3.4.1.2.).

3.8.6. Summary of Professional-Level Variables

Table 3.8 summarises the constructs and concepts identified in literature and categorised as professional-level variables:

Table 3.8: Professional-level variables

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Professional	Professional legacy	
	Lack of a clear definition	
	Lack of a body of knowledge	
	Showing the importance of communication	• Advocating, educating and defending the profession • Doing public relations research • Being visible in the organisation • Being proactive
	Role of professional bodies	• Membership • Enhancing recognition for the function • Setting standards for education and skills sets • Accreditation of the function • Professionalisation of the function • Enforcing ethical practice

3.9. SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to identify variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance as found in literature. The variables were categorised into five levels and each level of variables was discussed. The following table summarises all the constructs and concepts identified.

Table 3.9: Summary of the five levels of variables identified in literature

Level	Constructs	Concepts

Individual	Practitioner characteristics	• Age
		  ○ Time in the organisation
		  ○ Time in the public relations field
		• Race
		  ○ Affirmative action
		  ○ Acting as a cultural intermediary
		• Gender and sexual orientation
		• Stereotyping
		• Personality
		• Practitioner worldview

	Practitioner history	• Education and skills
		  ○ Level of education in corporate communication
		  ○ International knowledge of corporate communication
		  ○ Being able to enact the mixed-motive model
		• Experience
		• Networking

	Career management	• Career goals
		  ○ Practitioner view of corporate communication
		  ○ Role enactment
		• Making clear transitions from positions
		• Taking time out of their careers
		• Managing workloads

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Organisational	Shared expectations	
	Organisational characteristics	• Organisational size and structure • Organisational culture • Organisational politics • Structure and size of the public relations function • The organisation's unique stakeholder environment
	Management variables	• Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation • Access to management • Encroachment and pigeonholing • Management tolerance of diversity • Management variables: o Younger management better understanding the need for communication o Having a male or female direct manager o Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner
	Mentorship	Mentorship and internship
	Job satisfaction	• Advancement opportunities • Remuneration and benefits • Flexible hours • Lack of the *glass ceiling* • Recognition

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Industry	History	Historic role of public relations in the industry
	Industry environment	• Industry-specific regulations, such as BEE charters, policies, regulations, and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists
Country	• Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Cultural system • Level of development • Media system	• Crime • Corruption • Activist publics • BEE • Experience of working in the South African environment • Literacy levels • Cultural sensitivity • Media legislation • Job security • Social responsibility

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Professional	Professional legacy	
	Lack of a clear definition	
	Lack of a body of knowledge	
	Showing the importance of communication	• Advocating, educating and defending the profession • Doing public relations research • Being visible in the organisation • Being proactive
	Role of professional bodies	• Membership • Enhancing recognition for the function • Setting standards for education and skills sets • Accreditation of the function • Professionalisation of the function • Enforcing ethical practice

The next chapter will focus on the method of research that was followed in determining the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance to answer the research questions as defined in chapter one. The research method will focus on testing the variables identified in literature against the reality of the South African situation.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter identified the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance as discussed in literature. These variables were furthermore framed within the appropriate paradigms, meta-theories and theories as discussed in chapter two. The next challenge presented is then to test the theoretical findings against the reality of South African practitioner's experience in order to answer Specific research questions two to six. As Hurston (in Lewis, 2009b) stated: "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose".

This chapter explains the research method used, which includes the method of obtaining, analysing and interpreting data, to answer the Specific research questions. Table 4.1. gives a conceptual overview of the research approach, including the research strategy, design, population and data analysis methods used.

Table 4.1: Research planning

General research question	How can South African corporate communication practitioners enhance their contribution to organisational performance?
Specific research questions	1. Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally? 2. What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance? 3. How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform? 4. How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature? 5. What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa? 6. Which recommendations can be made to enhance the South African corporate communication practitioner's contribution to organisational performance?

Research strategy	Exploratory Interpretive	
Research design	• Literature study Methodological triangulation	Specific research question one
	• Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Specific research questions two, four and five
	• Quantitative: Questionnaire	Specific research questions two, three, four and five
	Using the knowledge gained from the above methods	Specific research question six
Population	South African corporate communication practitioners working in the top South African companies as per the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168)	
Observation unit	Corporate communication practitioners	
Data analysis	Qualitative data: • Qualitative content analysis	Specific research questions two, four and five
	Quantitative data: • Statistics calculated by means of Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) data analysis software: ○ Descriptive statistics ○ Correlations and differentiations ○ Reliability calculations ○ Factor analysis	Specific research questions two, three and four
	• Structural equation modelling by means of AMOS (SPSS Inc., 2009) software	Specific research question five

This study focused on applied research as the research not only aimed to understand a problem (pure research), but also to apply it to the field by providing practitioners with a better understanding of variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, as well as recommending how they can enhance their contribution to organisational performance (Babbie, 2004:28).

The research strategy will now be further explained.

4.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY

Science is typically seen as facts gained through research which are value free (Robson, 2002:20). The researcher is of the opinion that totally objective research, specifically within the social sciences, does not exist. However, by (i) declaring from which perspective the research is conducted, (ii) by clearly explaining the methodology, (iii) by being systematic (being methodological), (iv) sceptical (subjecting your ideas to possible disconfirmation) and (v) ethical (taking the interest of those taking part in the research into account), a scientific attitude is created within the researcher (Robson, 2002:18). This attitude will then guide the researcher to conduct ethical, valid and reliable research, as each aspect of the research method will be scrutinised.

This study has employed both an exploratory and interpretive research approach. This implies that the data on the phenomena will be captured in an exploratory fashion, while the interpretive approach will assist to contextualise the findings.

4.2.1. Exploratory Research

Exploratory studies focus on exploring and explaining a phenomenon, thus answering questions such as *what*, *where*, *when*, *how* and/or *why* in order to make sense of the phenomena (Babbie, 2004:89; Rubin *et al.*, 2005:206; Stebbins, 2001:2). This type of research is applicable when "… a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study itself is relatively new" (Babbie, 2004:87). In this study the researcher wanted to explain the phenomenon of variables influencing practitioners in practicing corporate communication that contribute to organisational performance.

As discussed in section 3.2. previous studies have examined some of the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. However, a comprehensive study, prioritising *all* the variables influencing the practitioner within the specific context of the South African environment, has not been done. This study will thus try to explore, as well as explain the influence of variables on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Babbie (2004:88) argues that exploratory research is done with three goals in mind:

1. to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding and in this process create new ideas (Stebbins, 2001:9),
2. to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and

3. to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

Specifically goals one and three are applicable to this study. Pertaining to the first goal, this extensive study is aimed at better understanding the variables influencing South African corporate communication practitioners in their contribution to organisational performance. Then pertaining to the third goal, the study offers methodological triangulation as research method, as well as structural equation modelling as data analysis method, to be considered for this type of research in future.

Although exploratory research are traditionally qualitative in nature, both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used, as long as the researcher clearly describes the methods to be used, and remains flexible and open-minded (Stebbins, 2001:6, 8-10).

4.2.2. Interpretive Research

As well as being exploratory this study followed the interpretive research paradigm where the researcher weaved together the participants' understanding of variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, and the researcher's own interpretation of the situation, as a basis for the research process (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326).

This approach differs from the phenomenological approach as the research does not only focus on the subjective experience and/or view of the respondents (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326; Robson, 2002:195). In this study it will also be important to interpret the view of the respondents within the theoretical background to the study, literature findings and findings of other similar studies conducted globally. Therefore the researcher added interpretation to the respondents' view.

Traditionally interpretive researchers used qualitative methods (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326). However, since this study aims to provide a benchmark in the South African environment in examining variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, the researcher used methodological triangulation. This implies that both quantitative and qualitative research methods were combined, in order to provide the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Decrop, 1999:158; Le Roux, 2005:305; Mangan *et al.*, 2004:569; Olsen, 2004:3). By combining these two methods more practitioners will be involved in the research, than what would have been the case if only

qualitative research were used. Therefore the results would be more generalisable than if only qualitative research were used.

From the research strategy the research design was developed.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was constructed in such a way as to deliver research that is as objective, reliable and valid as possible, within this specific complex research context.

4.3.1. Research Planning

Research planning should indicate how to generate and analyse data, while not only taking into account the research questions and complexities unique to each research context, but also contribute to the study's purpose, which in this case is to add to the knowledge base and understand complex phenomena (Newman *et al.*, 2003:173).

In this study the complexity of the context and research questions demanded mixed research methods to provide the opportunity to present a greater diversity of views and more in-depth understanding to enable the researcher to answer research questions that one research method can not ensure (Babbie, 2004:275; Denzin, 2006:323; Greene & Caracelli, 2003:101; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003:14-15). Mixed method research or methodological triangulation offers a method of both exploring and offering an in-depth understanding of phenomena. The result is that diverse ways of thinking, knowing and valuing are invited into the study, toward better understanding of the research problem, by using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to compare, summarise and analyse data (Babbie, 2004:26, 27; Denzin, 2006:314; Greene & Caracelli, 2003:93, 107; Le Roux, 2005:305; Robson, 2002:372).

As Babbie (2004:27) explained: "The good news is that we don't need to choose. In fact, we shouldn't. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are useful and legitimate in social research." Although Denzin (2006:313) argued that the design of triangulation will also add to the reliability and validity of research, as it will for instance minimise researcher bias, Blaikie (2006:339) argued that methodological triangulation should not be used solely for reducing error and bias, but rather to examine a specific phenomenon in more depth.

Furthermore, by using a mixed method design, it also added a major advantage to the study in that it enabled the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and thereby verify and generate theory in the same study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003:15). In this study all variables that influence practitioners' contribution to organisational performance within South Africa, that have not been previously explored in a single study, were investigated (see section 3.2.). Thus due to the explorative nature of the study it was necessary to use qualitative methods to better understand and describe the South African scenario. However, to determine the extent of and relationship between the variables, quantitative data had to be collected.

The researcher thus had to decide whether the qualitative and quantitative research had to be done consecutively, simultaneously or whether the one method is assigned to assist the other method (Creswell *et al.*, 2003:214). Babbie (2004:26) argued that all observations are qualitative at the start and can then be converted to numerical form.

In this study qualitative data was gathered first in order to assist with the constructing of the questionnaire for the collection of the quantitative data – thus typically *between-method* or *across-method* triangulation (Denzin, 2006:322). The findings of the qualitative and quantitative methods will also be compared where necessary in order to interpret the data (see figure 4.1.).

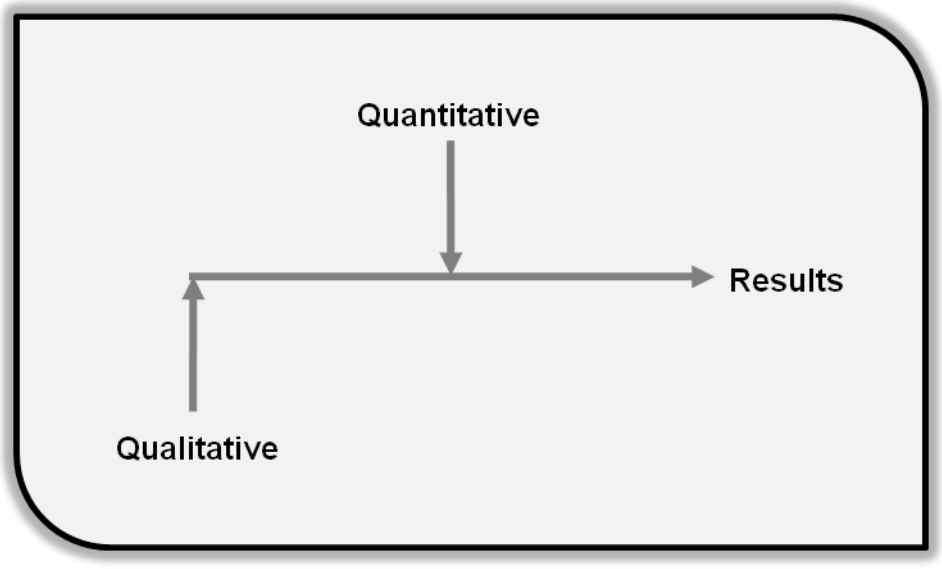


Figure 4.1: The use of qualitative and quantitative data

(Adapted from Creswell *et al.*, 2003:214).

However, in applying methodological triangulation, the researcher needed to keep the different assumptions used in the various methods, in mind (Blaikie, 2006:332).

Methodological triangulation (following combined methodology) was used in various other corporate communication studies such as the Excellence Study (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:ix; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:ix, x, 3), and Grunig *et al.*'s (2001:1-424) study on the influence of gender on the public relations practice. As Grunig *et al.* (2001:14) state "… of course, surveys are of limited value in examining the complex social relationships or the patterns of interaction involved in the question of equity for women. So we combined our quantitative data with qualitative data."

Table 4.1. summarises the research approach decided on to generate the data in order to answer each research objective. Each data generation method will now be discussed.

4.3.2. Literature Study

A literature study was conducted in order to answer Specific research question one:

> ***Specific research question 1***
> *Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally?*

The aim of the literature study was to identify variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, as mentioned in literature. In this vain the following databases were consulted to ascertain the availability of study material for the study:

- Catalogue of books: Ferdinand Postma Library (North-West University)
- NRF: Nexus
- Emerald Online
- ScienceDirect
- Sabinet Online
- EbscoHost which includes Academic Search Elite, Communication & Mass Media complete and Business Source Premier
- Research scripts from various universities were also studied.

Literature on various studies globally on the variables influencing practitioners in practicing excellent corporate communication, which contribute to organisational performance, were available (ref. Aldoory & Toth, 2002:103-126; Grunig *et al.,* 1992: 65-90; Lauzen, 1991:245-255; O'Neil, 2003a:159-169, 2004:127-144; Sweep *et al.,* 1994:319-331; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003c:1-601; Wrigley, 2002:27-55). However, South African studies pertaining to this subject were limited.

The following studies, however, touched on aspects pertaining to the variables influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance in South Africa:

- Angelopulo (2000:3-17), a South African researcher, used USA and United Kingdom respondents to study *Scalable Competency in the Communication Profession*. Thereby limiting the specific South African view of the variables influencing the practitioner.
- Steyn (2000c:20-43), completed a pure South African study, which lead to the identification and statistical verification of the strategist, manager and technician roles within the South African environment. Her findings were later confirmed by Everett's (2006:1-167) research. Although reporting that South African CEOs value and demand the role of strategist to be played by South African practitioners (Steyn, 2000c:20-43), the question of why practitioners do not perform this function still remained unanswered.
- Van Heerden (2004:1-288) studied the influence of macro-environmental factors on public relations in Africa pertaining to the model and roles followed and performed by practitioners, resulting in a unique practice on the African continent (Van Heerden, 2004:1-19).
- Various studies were also conducted to describe the South African public relations landscape (ref. Petersen *et al.* 2002:1-29; Holtzhausen, 2005:407-416; De Wet *et al.,* 2008:1-31; Niemann-Struweg & Meintjies, 2008:224-229). Although these studies provide valuable information on public relations in South Africa, the studies did not aim to examine the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisation performance.
- A study by Le Roux (2004:1-54), limited to the banking industry in South Africa, however, embarked on a qualitative investigation on constraints that kept practitioners from advancing in their profession. However, this study does not consider variables that could assist practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

Therefore, although valuable information has been gained through the completion of various studies, studies focussing on the variables influencing corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, have been limited.

Through an extensive literature study the researcher identified and categorised five levels of variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. Table 3.9 provides a summary of the constructs and concepts per variable level. The literature study thus preceded qualitative and quantitative data generation methods.

4.3.3. Qualitative research: Semi-structured Interviews

Within the realm of qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used to partly answer Specific research questions two, four and five:

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

Specific research question 5

What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

Semi-structured interviews were used to specifically learn about aspects that could not be directly observed and from which the researcher needed to understand the interviewees' perception and feelings (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326; Reinard, 1998:218). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were used to confirm the variables as mentioned in literature, as well as to identify additional variables not mentioned in literature, within the South African environment.

4.3.3.1. Sampling

A purposeful sampling method was used to select the respondents for the semi-structured interviews. This type of sampling method allowed the researcher to purposefully select senior practitioners, who are information rich, well-established and with experience and standing in the profession, and that can therefore provide valuable information on the research topic. This sampling method stemmed logically from the conceptual framework and research questions of the study (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:325, 329; Kemper *et al.*, 2003:275; Reinard, 1998:268; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:67). The aim of using this sampling method was thus not to have a representation of the general population (Reinard, 1998:269; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:67), but rather to provide rich exploratory information on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, in order to provide context to the quantitative phase of the study (Du Plooy, 2002:113).

Four individual practitioners as well as the chairpersons of each of the two professional bodies in South Africa (PRISA and IABC) were selected to take part in the semi-structured interviews. The sample of four senior practitioners was selected on the grounds of their experience and standing in the profession and the fact that they could provide an in-depth understanding of the research problem. The researcher also tried to select respondents from more than one of the South African population demographic groups (a black woman, black man and two white women), as well as from a variety of industries. These respondents did not participate in the subsequent questionnaire survey.

The views of the chairpersons of the two professional corporate communication bodies in South Africa were included in order to gain insight into both influences on practitioners and as well as the challenges faced by the professional bodies in assisting practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

4.3.3.2. Interview schedule

Qualitative semi-structured interviewing allowed the researcher to establish a conversation with each respondent based on a flexible interview schedule in order to explore intangible new concepts or intangible concepts within a new environment, such as the South African context. The researcher were free to deviate from the schedule to pursue specific topics, interesting responses, perceptions and feelings or underlying motives raised by the respondent (Babbie, 2004:300; Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326; Du Plooy, 2002:177; Reinard, 1998:219; Robson, 2002:270, 272-273). This interviewing technique therefore assisted the

researcher in true exploratory style to discover variables that influence practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, which might not have been mentioned in literature and are specific to the South African environment.

The questions used in the interview schedule followed the funnel method, starting with general questions and moving towards more specific questions (Reinard, 1998:220). The interviews were started with a grand tour question. Grand tour questions are open questions that allowed the respondent to construct a *map* of the phenomenon and give the researcher their point of view on the research topic (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:332). Three broadly defined sub-questions, or follow-up questions, were added to follow up or enhance the grand tour question and guide the conversation (Du Plooy, 2002:144). When answering the grand tour question, it was specifically important for the researcher to note what the respondent did say and what was not said or left out. The interview schedule can be seen in table 4.2.

After completing the grand tour question, and depending on the respondent's answer and after elaboration thereon, further broadly defined, open questions were asked to test the respondent's view on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. Follow up questions were asked where the respondent offered new information or made an interesting comment. Care was taken not to lead respondents by means of the questions asked, or to *remind* them of possible variables not mentioned by them.

Table 4.2: Interview schedule

Good morning / afternoon [Name]
Introduction
• Thank you for being willing to partake in this study. I know your time is precious. • The topic of the study is to understand the variables influencing South African corporate communication practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. Overseas research has investigated this aspect broadly; however, this topic still needs more investigation within the South African context. • Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your view and experiences. I understand that this information is sensitive and will keep it confidential. Your identity will not be revealed, and your views will be given anonymously. • Would it be acceptable to you if I recorded the interview for my own reference?
Grand tour questions
1. How would you define a successful / *good* corporate communication / public relations practitioner that contributes to organisational performance? Follow–up questions for the grand tour question: • What distinguishes a *good* practitioner from a *not-so-good* a practitioner? • Would your answer differ if I asked: how would you define a *good* / successful South African corporate communication practitioner?

Testing specific concepts	
2. How would you describe the variables pertaining to the practitioner itself (*individual*-level) in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance?	
Practitioner characteristics	Age, time in organisations, time in public relations, race, affirmative action, acting as a cultural intermediary, gender and sexual orientation, stereotyping, personality, practitioner worldview
Practitioner history	Education and skills, level of education in corporate communication, international knowledge of corporate communication, being able to enact the mixed-motive model, experience, networking
Career management	Career goals, practitioner view of corporate communication, role enactment, making clear transitions from positions, taking time out of their careers, managing workloads
3. How would you describe the variables pertaining to the organisation in which the practitioner works (*organisational*-level) in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance?	
Shared expectations	
Organisational characteristics	Organisation size and structure, organisation culture, organisational politics, structure and size of the public relations function, the organisation's unique stakeholder environment
Management influences	Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation, access to management, encroachment and pigeonholing, management tolerance of diversity, management variables: younger management better understanding the need for communication, having a male of female direct manager, management taking credit for work done by the practitioner
Mentorship	Mentorship and internship
Job satisfaction	Advancement opportunities, remuneration and benefits, flexible hours, lack of the *glass ceiling*, recognition
4. How would you describe the variables pertaining to the industry in which the practitioner works (*industry*-level) in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance?	
History	Historic role of public relations in the industry
Industry environment	Industry specific regulations, such as BEE charters, policies, regulations and the *King II Report*, working with specific stakeholders, such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists
5. How would you describe the variables pertaining to South Africa (*country*-specific) in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance?	

Country variables	Political and economic systems, extent of activism, cultural system, level of development and media system
Specific	Crime, corruption, activist publics, BEE, experience of working in the South African environment, literacy levels, cultural sensitivity, media legislation, job security, social responsibility
6. How would you describe the variables pertaining to the profession (*professional*-level) in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance?	
Professional legacy	
Lack of a clear definition	
Lack of a body of knowledge	
Showing the importance of communication	Advocating, defending and educating management on public relations, doing public relations research, being visible in the organisation, being proactive
Role of professional bodies	Membership, enhancing recognition for the function, setting standards for education and skills sets, accreditation of the function, professionalisation of the function, enforcing ethical practice
Conclusion	
• Is there anything else that you would like to add to the discussion that you think we have not covered? • Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study.	

In conclusion the respondents were asked to mention any variables that were not discussed that could have an influence on practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. The interview was then closed by thanking the respondent for their time.

4.3.3.3. Procedure followed with semi-structured interviews

Respondents identified to participate in the semi-structured interviews were telephonically contacted and requested to participate in the study (ref. Reinard, 1998:221). All agreed and a time for an interview was scheduled. Face-to-face interviews could be set up for two of the practitioners. The other two practitioners and the two professional body chairpersons could not commit to face-to-face interviews due to their busy schedules and telephone interviews were arranged with them. All the interviews were conducted during November 2006 by the researcher.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the respondents' offices and the telephone interviews were conducted from the researcher's office. For both face-to-face and telephone interviews, the procedure was similar. On starting the interview the interviewer informed the respondents of the title of the study and purpose for the interview. Thereafter confidentiality

was discussed and permission to record the interview established. The interview was then conducted as per the interview schedule discussed in section 4.3.3.2. above.

The personal and telephonic interviews with practitioners lasted between 45 and 60 minutes each. The interviews with the professional body chairpersons were, however, slightly shorter, lasting 22 and 40 minutes respectively.

4.3.3.4. Data capturing and analysis

Each interview was transcribed and analysed through qualitative content analysis.

The qualitative content analysis entailed not focussing on counting and numbers, but rather on assessing trends by discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships between concepts (Babbie, 2004:370, 371). This was done according to the levels of variables identified in literature (see table 3.9), also referred to as thematic units. Thematic units are repeating patterns of propositions of ideas related to the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance (Du Plooy, 2002:191). As mentioned before, it was important for the researcher to not only categorise the variables and analyse it by thematic units, but also be open to new variables offered by the practitioners.

Ideally the categorisation used in qualitative content analysis should consist of mutually exclusive categories, implying that each variable can only be included in one category (Du Plooy, 2002:119). Unfortunately due to the nature of the study and the variables explored, some constructs do not clearly fall into one or another category (see section 3.3). For instance the question: “Does having a mentor or role model have an influence on becoming a *good* practitioner?” could arguably be categorised under the personal or organisational-level of variables. Therefore, for ease of categorisation, the concepts were analysed within the five levels of variables as identified, defined and described in the literature study (see chapter 3). This then adheres to the demand set by Robson (2002:355) that selecting and clearly defining the categories are the most crucial aspect of qualitative content analysis.

In order to both clearly categorise and identify variables not previously mentioned in literature, the researcher specifically decided not to use any computer programs in the coding and analysis of the data, as some valuable insights from the respondents might be lost when this is done.

In the analysis of the qualitative data the question was raised as to whether practitioners experience the levels of variables as categorised in literature. This is discussed in the interview findings (see section 5.2.1.5.).

4.3.3.5. Validity and reliability

Since there is a strong sense of personal interpretation in qualitative research, some reliability, or consistency of measurement and results, can be lost (Babbie, 2004:8, 141-142, 308; Bryman & Cramer 1997:63; Robson, 2002:101). Ensuring reliability (consistency) and validity (ensuring that the concepts indicated are truly those measured) within qualitative research is of utmost importance (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:65).

The researcher had to keep in mind that the respondents were not neutral in reporting their experiences during the semi-structured interviews, as they recall experiences in terms of their own biased memories (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326). The researcher also had to refrain from applying selective observation, where only patterns fitting the researcher's idea of the research problem were observed and other facts ignored (Babbie, 2004:9). Another potential mistake could be reductionism, where complex phenomena are seen in terms of a single narrow concept or set of concepts (Babbie, 2004:101).

To limit these possible problems and increase reliability, interviews were recorded, transcribed and qualitatively content analysed. Specifically during the content analysis phase inter-coder reliability could become a possible problem impacting on consistency (treating all similar data in a similar way). In this case, the researcher thematically analysed all the interviews personally by hand, according to the conceptual structure provided in the literature study. The coding was then checked by another researcher (the study supervisor) (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:65).

Furthermore, in order to improve validity, the findings of the interviews were triangulated with literature and later also with the questionnaire findings, which confirmed, explained further or in some cases contradicted the interviewees' responses.

Specifically in qualitative research internal validity, where the research design takes into account all influences on the phenomena being studied (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:103; Du Plooy, 2002:84), is of great importance. Internal validity is evaluated against the following criteria (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:235, 344):

- *Dependability* points to the degree to which the information gathered by the researcher is a dependable view of the actual interview. In this study dependability was increased by recording the interview and then transcribing the interviews for data analysis.
- *Conformability* indicates whether the researcher can in fact reach particular conclusions from the data. In this study conformability were reached first by the specific selection of information rich respondents, established within the public relations profession, and second, by triangulating the data with the quantitative data.
- *Credibility* is evaluated by looking at how the researcher's conclusions correlate with the interviewee's review of the phenomena. In this study interview findings were not discussed with the respondents in a second interview, but the triangulation design offered credibility to the data.
- *Transferability* indicates that the researcher should acknowledge that the data obtained is not representative for the whole population of practitioners in South Africa, but that the data obtained in the interviews will be rich in information and relevant for these specific practitioners. The aim of the semi-structured interviews in this study was to understand how practitioners experience the variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa and to understand how these findings are similar or different from those in literature.

4.3.3.6. Challenges

Two challenges were experienced in completing the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

First, practitioners and even the chairpersons of the professional bodies are extremely busy and therefore finding a suitable time for a research interview, which is not critical to their job, was challenging although they were keen to discuss the topic.

Second, each practitioner had a strong view on certain variables and would tend to come back to those variables in response to further interview questions. The researcher had to then guide them subtly (without leading them) to move away from these specific variables, in order to also touch on other important variables.

4.3.3.7. Personal observations

The researcher made the following observations during the interviews:

- Respondents were keen to discuss the research topic as this was seen as an important aspect that should receive attention within the profession.
- Each respondent's experience of the profession differs slightly, resulting in similar situations being interpreted differently. This could explain why there is not yet agreement on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.
- The various respondents had different opinions about certain issues depending on their specific career experiences. For instance one might focus on management's influence, while another focuses on affirmative action as a variable.
- Respondents were keen to explain their career experience. However, they tend to have a lot of criticism toward other practitioners' career experience. This could be related to the challenging nature of the profession and stiff competition for jobs.

4.3.4. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as quantitative research method to answer Specific research questions two, three, four and five:

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 3

How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

Specific research question 5

What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

4.3.4.1. Sampling

Constructing a sampling method that would be meaningful and sound was a challenge in this study as the unit of observation was: (people) South African corporate communication practitioners (Babbie, 2004:94) of which there are no complete list or database available. The researcher also had to ensure that a large enough sample would be realised in order to provide sufficient data for the statistical analysis of multiple-response data (several measurements on the same subject) and to limit over-generalisation (Babbie, 2004:9; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:75).

One could consider using the membership lists of the two professional bodies in South Africa (PRISA and IABC). However, the researcher are of the opinion that using the membership lists of professional organisations would not be sufficient as literature has strongly suggested that very few practitioners globally belong to professional bodies (Grunig *et al.,* 2001:202; O'Connor and Falconi, 2003:2; see section 1.3.1.1.). This could also be the case in South Africa. Thus using the professional body membership lists had the potential to exclude many practitioners from the research sample.

However, including all practitioners in South Africa would have lead to considerable time and cost being committed to the study (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:98, 99). Therefore the researcher had to conceptualise a different method of sampling that would be applicable to the specific research questions of the study and that could be treated as representative of the population (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:99).

Since the research focused on variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, it was decided to define the practitioners from top performing organisations within South Africa as the population. A sample selected from this population could then be statistically representative for practitioners active in South Africa's top performing organisations (Du Plooy, 2002:100; Hayes, 2005:38). This sampling method would typically be seen as cluster sampling (Hair *et al.*, 2006:102; Hayes, 2005:39; Reinard, 1998:267), and is useful where a complete list of the target population is not available (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:156). Cluster sampling entails dividing the population into clusters or groups and then selecting a sample from the clusters applicable to the study. In multistage cluster sampling the steps of listing and sampling are merely repeated (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:156-157).

In this study it is thus agued that South African practitioners can be clustered into various groups, for example practitioners operating within government, or the non-profit sector, or small and medium enterprises, and so forth. The group or cluster of practitioners then important to this study, would be those working in South Africa's top performing organisations.

Defining the population parameters in this manner would then exclude practitioners working in the non-profit sector, state or para-statal sector, or small and medium business sector, which falls outside the aims of the study. According to Kemper *et al.* (2003:279) this type of cluster sampling is ideal when trying to research a group occurring within a population – in this case the group (or cluster) was corporate communication practitioners working in the top performing organisations in South Africa, within the population of all South African corporate communication practitioners.

The top performing organisations in South Africa across all industries are listed on the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168).

The *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) is compiled for TopCo Media Publications and Websites. Although this list was started as the Top 300 Company's List in South Africa, more and more companies started to achieve the benchmarks set for inclusion in the list and the list has grown to include around 1800 organisations in total. According to their website (TopCo, 2008) the companies are selected on the following organisational performance grounds:

- Benchmark annual turnover level of R100-million
- Sector/market leader
- Quality of operation
- Economic growth
- Organisational growth
- Triple bottom line performance
- Size of operation
- Innovation/management
- Employment equity policy
- Strategic contribution
- Export orientation

The *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168) is based on a rating assigned to organisations based on a combination of factors including financial aspects, corporate governance and empowerment commitment, amongst others (Williams, 2005:11). Only the top 200 organisations in South Africa are selected for this list.

First, the researcher decided to draw a random sample of 500 companies from only the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330), as it was expected that information obtained from practitioners working in these organisations would provide the researcher with an acceptable response rate.

Since it was not possible to estimate the number of practitioners working within these companies it was not possible to determine a final calculated sample size (Babbie 1983, in Du Plooy, 2002:104, 105), therefore *all* the practitioners from the selected 500 companies would be included in the sampling. Before drawing the random sample of 500 companies, all government owned organisations, for example, municipalities, government departments and agencies and para-statal organisations such as ESKOM, Rand Water and Denel were excluded from the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330). This then left a total of 1 119 companies on the list from which 500 organisations were selected randomly.

After contacting all practitioners within the randomly selected 500 organisations from the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330), it was found that very few respondents returned the questionnaires. Therefore action had to be taken to solicit a larger number of returned questionnaires.

The next step was then to include all 1 119 organisations in the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) in the sample. Companies that were already contacted were not contacted again.

However, even after including the complete list of 1 119 companies an insufficient number of questionnaires were returned. Therefore the researcher had to take a third step to increase the response rate.

The researcher used the opportunity to make personal contact with practitioners working for organisations on the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) at the 4th World Public Relations Festival held in Cape Town, South Africa in 2006, and asked them to complete the questionnaire which would be emailed to them. Of the 77 people

contacted with this method, 21 completed the questionnaire. Care was taken to ensure that these practitioners had not already completed a questionnaire before the conference.

These replies increased the response rate, but not sufficiently in the opinion of the researcher to deliver statistically sound results. Therefore, as a fourth step to increase the number of questionnaires returned, the sampling population was extended to include the 200 organisations listed in the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). This increased the population to include all the organisations on the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). Care was taken to ensure that companies were not duplicated on the final list, which then consisted of 1 319 organisations (please see Addendum A for the complete list of organisations contacted).

In addition the researcher asked corporate communication consultants known to the researcher, who were working for some of the companies on the combined list, to hand deliver questionnaires and cover letters to the practitioners in the companies for completion. This method proved very valuable and 17 questionnaires were obtained in this manner. These questionnaires were then hand delivered or posted back to the researcher.

In the end all the practitioners from the organisations within the defined population were contacted and requested to complete a questionnaire, resulting in a census approach instead of actual sampling (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:64) – thus staying true to the intended nature of cluster sampling (Hayes, 2005:39) (see section 4.3.4.5. on the response rate).

Specifically in this study it is important that the researcher strives to include minority groups in the function where possible, such as male and black practitioners in the sample (see section 2.2.2.4., 3.4.1.2. and 3.4.1.3.). Previous management and communication research has not always included minorities, or included such small numbers of them that it was not possible to make generalisations (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2001:122-124).

4.3.4.2. Compilation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed to test the variables influencing public relations practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, focussing on the constructs and concepts as identified in literature and the semi-structured interviews (see chapter 3 and 5). Three aspects identified in the semi-structured interviews, not mentioned in literature, were also included in the questionnaire; namely, multilingualism, connectedness and the

practitioner having a higher qualification than their direct manager (see section 5.2.3.). Since there were a large number of constructs and concepts to include in the questionnaire, the researcher had to plan the questionnaire meticulously, keeping in mind aspects like question-wording, answer coding, length, possible respondent fatigue, and so forth (Robson, 2002:230; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:111-113). Even the different levels of measurement had to be kept in mind, as this would determine the type of statistical analysis that could be done with the obtained data (Babbie, 2004:136).

The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter that explained the aim of the research to respondents and confirmed confidentiality. Thereafter instructions to the respondents on how to answer the questions, and the time that it would take to complete the questionnaire, followed.

The questionnaire was constructed according to the funnel method (Du Plooy, 2002:173). Questions were listed in a logical sequence from general questions on respondent demographics and information pertaining to their career, work environment and role performed (*warm up* questions), to more detailed questions about the practitioners' perceptions about variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:119). The idea was also to create interest and motivation through the introductory questions, in order to interest the respondents in answering the rest of the questionnaire (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:119). Refer to the complete questionnaire in Addendum B.

The following table summarises the general questions describing the respondents. The questions are divided into sections for ease of reference.

Table 4.3: Summary of questions describing the respondents

INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE RESPONDENTS	QUESTION IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE
Respondents' demographic information	
Gender	3
Race	4
Age	5
All qualifications	11
Corporate communication qualifications	12

Influence of crime	13
INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE RESPONDENTS	**QUESTION IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE**
Languages that can be spoken, written, read	15
Home language	16
Respondents' view of the personal characteristics necessary for the practitioner	24
Practitioner worldview	32
Respondents' experience of the profession	
Use of the terms *corporate communication* or *public relations*	1
Membership of a professional organisation	20
Payment of professional organisation membership	23
Respondents' view of why people move to corporate communication from other professions	25
Respondents' career experience	
Type of employment: employee or consultant	A
Monthly income	8
Years experience in corporate communication	9
Job title	2
Type of employment: full time or part time worker	6
Years working for a particular organisation	10
Mentorship	14
Experience outside corporate communication	21
Time taken out of their career	22
Respondents' organisational environment	
Gender of the practitioner's direct manager	7
Organisation's annual communication budget	17
Type of communication research conducted by the organisation	18
Focus of communication research conducted by the organisation	19
Organisational management type	26

The true and false question pertaining to organisational management type as authoritarian or participative (question 26) was based on the statements tested by Dozier *et al.* (1995:139).

These authors suggested ten items to test both authoritarian and participative management style. However in order to keep the questionnaire as short as possible some of the statements that were considered to be repetitive, were condensed into a single statement or omitted. Only four statements testing participative and two statements testing authoritarian management style was used in the questionnaire (see Addendum B).

To test the roles performed by the practitioners the questions as used and empirically verified by Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:36-37) were used. The following table shows the questions used to determine the role performed by the respondents.

Table 4.4: Questions used to determine the roles performed by the practitioner

Question on	Role to determine	Questions pertaining to each role
Most important five tasks performed over the last three months	Strategist Manager Technician	29
Tasks performed by the respondent	Strategist Manager Technician	27c, f, h, l, o 27b, d, g, j, m 27a, e, l, k, n, p
Time allocated to the tasks performed by the respondent	Strategist Manager Technician	28c, f, h, l, o 28b, d, g, j, m 28a, e, l, k, n, p

From there questions on practitioners' perceptions of the variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance were developed and added as per the concepts and constructs identified in literature and the semi-structured interviews (Du Plooy, 2002:137). The aim of these questions was to test the respondents' perception of the variables influencing them in their contribution to organisational performance. Table 4.5 explains which questions in the questionnaire related to which constructs and concepts identified in literature.

Table 4.5: Questions testing respondent's perceptions of variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance

Level	Construct	Concepts	Question
Individual	Practitioner characteristics	• Age	30.40
		○ Time in the organisation	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		○ Time in the public relations field	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Race	30.4, 33.34, 33.28
		○ Affirmative Action	30.27, 30.34
		○ Acting as a cultural intermediary	33.29
		• Gender and sexual orientation	30.1, 30.2, 30.3, 30.11, 33.35
		• Multilingualism (identified in interviews)	33.37
		• Stereotyping	30.3, 30.4, 33.34, 33.35
		• Personality	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Practitioner worldview	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
	Practitioner history	• Education and skills	33.1, 33.2, 33.3, 33.4, 33.7, 33.8, 33.9, 33.10, 33.11, 33.12, 33.13, 33.29
		○ Level of education in corporate communication	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		○ International knowledge of corporate communication	30.19
		○ Being able to enact the mixed-motive model	30.30, 30.31, 33.24, 33.29
		• Experience	30.19 Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Networking	30.5, 33.5
	Career management	• Career goals	33.6
		○ Practitioner view of corporate communication	33.40, 33.46, 33.47
		○ Role enactment	30.12, 33.23, 33.24, 33.33, 33.50
		• Making clear transitions from positions	30.33
		• Taking time out of their careers	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Managing workloads	30.12, 30.33

Level	Construct	Concepts	Question
Organisational	Shared expectations		33.15, 33.45
	Organisational characteristics	• Organisation size and structure	30.10, 30.41, 30.42
		• Organisation culture	30.36, 30.37, 30.38
		• Organisational politics	30.13, 33.16
		• Structure and size of the public relations department	33.22, 33.41
		• The organisation's unique stakeholder environment	30.24, 30.30, 30.31, 30.39
	Management variables	• Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation	30.35, 33.18, 33.25
		• Access to management	33.19, 33.20
		• Encroachment and pigeonholing	30.20, 33.41
		• Management tolerance of diversity	30.7, 30.31, 33.34, 33.35
		• Management variables	
		○ Younger management better understanding the need for communication	30.6, 30.7
		○ Having a higher educational qualification than their direct manager (identified in interviews)	30.9
		○ Having a male or female direct manager	30.8
		○ Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
	Mentorship	Mentorship and internship	33.21 Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
	Job satisfaction	• Job satisfaction	30.15
		• Advancement opportunities	30.14
		• Remuneration and benefits	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Flexible hours	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Lack of the *glass ceiling*	30.1, 30.3, 33.35
		• Recognition	30.35, 33.19, 33.25

Level	Construct	Concepts	Question
Industry	History	Historic role of public relations in the industry	33.30, 33.31, 33.38
	Industry environment	• Industry specific regulations such as BEE charters, policies, regulations and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists	33.32 30.44, 33.36
Country	• Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Cultural system • Level of development • Media system	• Crime	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Corruption	30.29
		• Activist publics	30.44
		• BEE	30.43
		• Experience of working in the South African environment	33.26, 33.27
		• Literacy levels	33.36
		• Cultural sensitivity	33.39
		• Media legislation	33.48
		• Connectedness (identified in the interviews)	30.22
		• Job security	30.26
		• Social responsibility	33.31
Professional	Professional legacy		30.28, 30.29
	Lack of a clear definition		30.25
	Lack of a body of knowledge		This aspect was not included in the questionnaire as it is deemed the responsibility of academia to increase the body of knowledge (see sections 1.3.1.2. and 3.8.3).
	Showing the importance of communication	• Advocating, defending and educating management on public relations	30.21, 30.23, 30.32, 33.14, 33.17
		• Doing public relations research	Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Being visible in the organisation	33.42
		• Being proactive	30.36 Included in the role determination section

Level	Construct	Concepts	Question
Professional	Role of professional bodies	• Membership	33.43 Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Enhancing recognition for the function	30.21, 33.14, 33.17
		• Setting standards for education and skills sets	30.18
		• Accreditation of the function	30.16, 30.17, 33.49
		• Professionalisation of the function	33.43, 33.44 Included in *information describing respondents* section (see table 4.3)
		• Enforcing ethical practice	33.44

In the questionnaire various scales were used through which respondents could assign their responses, and which were then used to measure and statistically analyse each variable (Babbie, 2004:152; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:53). Table 4.6 summarises the scales used in the questionnaire:

Table 4.6: Measurement scales used in the questionnaire

Question	Type of measurement scale
A, 1, 3-14, 17-23, 25, 27	Clear categories to select from, multiple choice format questions (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:114).
2, 15, 16, 29	Open ended questions
24, 28	Rating questions
26	True / false question
32	Semantic differential scale question
30 and 33	Likert-type scale

In order to test the respondents' perceptions on variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, a Likert-type scale was used in questions 30 and 33. A Likert scale, which is also known as a summated rating approach, allows the respondents to select an option from a range of options, thereby indicating their intensity of perception towards that specific statement (Babbie, 2004:167, 169; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:54, 114). In addition Likert scales can look interesting to respondents, and people often enjoy completing a scale of this kind (Robson, 2002:293).

The North West University's Statistical Consultation Service verified and checked the measurement levels and coding of the questionnaire before it was finalised.

4.3.4.3. Pre-testing the questionnaire

The questionnaire had to be pre-tested in order to ensure its usefulness and to make sure all questions could be understood correctly (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:136). The questionnaire was firstly shown to experts in this field of research for comment and then pre-tested.

The respondents involved in the pre-testing of the questionnaire were not part of the final sample, but did represent the characteristics of the sample population as active corporate communication practitioners (Babbie, 2004:256). Corporate communication practitioners from the North-West University were asked to partake in the pre-test. Their feedback on the

questionnaire, questions asked and comments were taken into account to amend the questionnaire were necessary.

The major worrying factor identified during the pre-test was the length of the questionnaire, which took on average 20 minutes to complete. Respondent fatigue was identified as a possible problem, as respondents may not give thoughtful responses, or may not complete the questionnaire, once they become tired (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:103; Robson, 2002:238; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:121). Wimmer and Dominick (1994:121) suggests that in their experience a self-administered questionnaire in a group situation which is supervised can take 60 minutes at most, with a self-administered mail survey taking up around 15 minutes at most.

The practitioners in the pre-test, however, found the subject matter and questions very interesting and feedback from the respondents indicated that although the questionnaire was lengthy, the subject matter intrigued the respondents sufficiently to motivate the completion of the questionnaire in a reliable manner.

The following changes were made to the questionnaire following the pre-test:

- ***Questions added***

The respondents brought it to the researcher's attention that all practitioners working for the organisation might not be full time employees, and that this might influence their answers. Therefore question A was added:

A. Do you work as a public relations / corporate communication ...

consultant (providing services for various companies)	
employee of one company	

- ***Wording changes***

Due to the fact that not all post-school qualifications follow chronologically on each other and that having a certain qualification does not indicate having another qualification (for example, a person might complete a degree and then a diploma, and not necessarily follow the degree up with an honours study), the wording on the two questions testing qualifications was changed from:

"What is your highest qualification?" to "Please indicate ALL your qualifications."

"What is your highest qualification in corporate communication?" to "Please indicate ALL your qualifications in corporate communication."

This method of questioning would also allow the researcher more freedom in reporting on specific qualifications.

- ***Shortening the questionnaire***

Due to the length of the questionnaire, all the questions had to be reconsidered and critically evaluated. Some questions were reconsidered and found not to directly contribute to the research objectives. These questions were then omitted from the questionnaire or shortened, in an attempt to shorten the questionnaire.

The one instance where questions were replaced with a shortened question is the following question on the channels of communication used. The original question were omitted and replaced with a single statement.

Please rate the following channels of communication from 1 (most often) to 4 (least often) according to which your organisation uses most often for the particular stakeholder group. **Please leave those not applicable / unknown out.**	Employees	Community	Government	Media	Suppliers
a. Electronic media (internet, intranet, web pages, sms)					
b. Printed media (newspapers, staff newsletters)					
c. Broadcast media (television, radio)					
d. Traditional media (Storytelling, industrial theatre)					

was changed to:

30.38	38. In this organisation electronic media (internet, intranet, web pages, sms) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees, clients or suppliers

In another instance, regarding the proactiveness of the function, the question was omitted.

In this organisation we mostly practice…

Pro-active corporate communication (identifying new opportunities for communication, taking an active role in the business		Re-active corporate communication (reacting to events, waiting for instructions)	

This last question was also found to be leading.

Another question that was omitted in order to shorten the questionnaire, was the following:

"Below are two sets of statements regarding influences on the corporate communication practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, listed opposite each other. Please indicate your level of agreement with one or the other by making a cross in the appropriate box."

a. Practitioners being educated and having experience in corporate communication						Organisation management being open to communication
b. Practitioners being educated and having experience in corporate communication						Practitioners knowing legislation and having knowledge of the industry they work in
c. Practitioners being educated and having experience in corporate communication						Practitioners understanding diversity / changes in South Africa / being able to communicate to literate and illiterate stakeholders
d. Practitioners being educated and having experience in corporate communication						The profession being clearly defined and accredited
e. Organisation management being open to communication						Practitioners knowing legislation and having knowledge of the industry they work in
f. Organisation management being open to communication						Practitioners understanding diversity / changes in South Africa / being able to communicate to literate and illiterate stakeholders
g. Organisation management being open to communication						The profession being clearly defined and accredited
h. Practitioners knowing legislation and having knowledge of the industry they work in						Practitioners understanding diversity / changes in South Africa / being able to communicate to literate and illiterate stakeholders
i. Practitioners knowing legislation and having knowledge of the industry they work in						The profession being clearly defined and accredited
j. Practitioners understanding diversity / changes in South Africa / being able to communicate to literate and illiterate stakeholders						The profession being clearly defined and accredited

In this question an attempt was made to rate the levels of variables against each other. However, the question was very complicated to answer as it expected from the respondents to rate statements against each other, which are not necessarily on a continuum.

Furthermore, inferential statistical analysis of the perception questions (questions 30 and 33), by means of structural equation modelling, could also indicate the relationships between the variables (see section 4.3.4.8.5.). This question was therefore eliminated due to its complexity and in order to shorten the questionnaire.

- ***Questions not deleted but moved in order to be included in the perception testing questions (questions 30 and 33)***

Some questions were found to have more value when moved to the perception testing questions (questions 30 and 33). For instance the following question only offered a yes or no answer, where a rating could provide the researcher with more valuable information. The question:

> "Does your organisation have a policy that limits your department to use BEE companies for corporate communication projects. Yes / No"

was changed to:

30. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. If you do not have a specific opinion on a statement you may select 'Do not know'.	**Fully agree**	**Mostly agree**	**Neutral**	**Mostly disagree**	**Fully disagree**	**Do not know**
43. Using BEE agencies / contractors to fulfil corporate communication tasks limits the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance						

- ***Questions found to be too complicated***

In the question rating the characteristics that could best assist the communication practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, respondents were asked to rate all 10 characteristics in an order from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important). The respondents found this very hard and the question was changed to ask the respondents to only rate the top 5 characteristics from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).

Also question 27 originally asked respondents to immediately indicate the percentage of time allocated to the list of practitioner tasks. This implied that respondents had to indicate the tasks they participate in, as well as express the time spent on each task. Respondents found this overwhelming and difficult. Therefore the two aspects of this question were separated. The first question (question 27) then only asked the respondents to indicate which tasks they perform. The follow-up question (question 28) then asked them to indicate the time spend on

each of the tasks. Respondents found answering the two separate questions easier than answering the single combined question.

4.3.4.4. Data collection

The questionnaire data was collected during the 10 months of October 2006 to July 2007.

The procedure that was followed in contacting the companies on the lists (as explained in section 4.3.4.1.) consisted of research assistants, trained by the researcher, contacting each company's reception by telephone and asking to speak with the corporate communication or public relations practitioner(s). This included *all* or *any* of the practitioners or the *head* of the function. In many cases companies did not have dedicated public relations practitioners. The research assistants then had to explain that they needed to speak to the practitioners dealing with internal or external communication or stakeholder management. They were then referred until they could reach the appropriate person(s). The assistants then explained the aim of the research and requested the respondents to complete the questionnaire that would be emailed to them (see Addendum C for the email to respondents).

If respondents did not return the completed questionnaire, a follow-up email (see Addendum E) was sent one to two weeks later, followed by another telephone call two weeks to one month later. Where necessary the questionnaires were resend to respondents. All the emails were sent from the researcher's email account so as to identify the questionnaire and research as valid email communication. A letter to the respondents was also included in the email explaining the aims of the research (see Addendum D).

It was found that practitioners were extremely busy and not always available to complete questionnaires, which negatively influenced the response rate. Therefore the researcher embarked on three specific actions to increase the response rate (see section 4.3.4.1.):

- The sample size was increased.
- The researcher personally contacted practitioners working at organisations included the sample at the 4th World Public Relations Festival held in Cape Town, South Africa in 2006.
- The researcher enlisted the assistance of corporate communication consultants known to the researcher, who were working for some of the companies on the combined list, to hand deliver questionnaires and cover letters to the practitioners in the companies for completion.

Once a completed questionnaire(s) was received, the company name was identified (mainly by means of the email address or email business card/signature of the respondent) and marked against the company list. The company was not contacted again. The questionnaires were then numbered, in order to furthermore ensure anonymity.

See the attached addendums for examples of the email to respondents (Addendum C), the letter sent to respondents (Addendum D) and the follow-up email to respondents (Addendum E).

4.3.4.5. Response rate

A total of 275 questionnaires were returned which indicated a response rate of 21%. However, some of the questionnaires were not usable due to the respondents not completing the majority of the questions or, after the researcher investigated question 27 and 29, did not indicate that they perform any corporate communication tasks. In accordance with Bryman and Cramer (1997:103) the researcher argued that such missing information, that does not indicate that the person is a corporate communication practitioner, may be sources of bias within the sample, and these questionnaires were omitted.

The number of questionnaires then used in the study was 262. This constitutes a response rate of 19.9%. Acknowledging practitioners' limited time to take part in research which does not form part of their jobs, the response rate is satisfactory. It matches well with other public relations studies which yielded a 12.8% (Grunig et al., 2001:124), 19.3% (Kim & Reber, 2008:338) and 20.9% (O'Neil, 2003b:161) response rate respectively.

4.3.4.6. Data capturing and coding

All the questions, except questions 2, 15, 16 and 29 which were open ended questions, were pre-coded in order to assist with data capturing, before the questionnaire was distributed to respondents (Du Plooy, 2002:175). The pre-coded data was captured by the researcher in an excel spreadsheet and then transferred to the statistical software programme, once the completed questionnaires had been received.

After studying the results of the open questions, the researcher created categories for each question, which were then coded. The first open ended question focused on the job titles of respondents (question 2); question 15 focused on the languages that respondents could

read, write and speak; the respondents' home language (question 16); and question 29 on the top five tasks completed by the respondents in the past three months. In all these cases the researcher categorised and coded the answers, which were then captured accordingly. Table 4.7 provides an example of the categorisation and coding. The example used pertains to question 2 on job titles.

Table 4.7: Job title coding

Titles		Code
Communication practitioners, officers or specialists or communication task specific titles – not on the managerial level:		**1**
Acting communications specialist	Guest relations officer	
Communication and design consultant	In-house journalist	
Communication consultant	Media analyst	
Communication coordinator	Media liaison manager	
Communication(s) officer	Media relations manager	
Communications business partner	National media relations manager	
Communications officer: Business development and marketing	National public relations officer	
	PR & Events division manager	
Communication(s) specialist	Projects coordinator corporate social investment	
Consultant internal communications		
Content consultant	Public relations / communications leader	
Corporate communication(s) coordinator	Public relations officer	
Corporate communications practitioner	Public relations support office	
Corporate communications specialist	Publications manager	
Events and sponsorship specialist	Specialist communications	
Events coordinator	Specialist: communication and public relations	
Events manager		
Graphic designer	Superintendent: public relations	
Administrative titles:		**2**
Administrative assistant	Receptionist	
Operations support officer	Registry administrator	
Personal assistant		
Communication practitioners on the managerial level:		**3**
Assistant manager: Communications	Internal communications manager	
Chief communications officer	International pro	
Communication & Investor relations manager	Liaison manager	
	Manager: electronic communications	
Communication(s) manager	Manager: pr & events	
Corporate communications manager	Manager: communications, group public affairs	
Director legal and communications		
Director of communication and public relations	Manager: Corporate Communications	
	Manager: internal communications	
Employee communications manager	Public relations and sponsorship manager	
External communications manager	Public relations manager	
Group communications officer	Senior Manager: internal communication(s)	
Group manager employee relations		
Group manager: corporate communication	General Manager: investor relations	
	Group industrial relations manager	
Group PRO	Investor relations executive	
Head: External communications		

Titles		Code
Titles associated with being responsible for a client account, thus providing consultation services:		**4**
Account director	Managing member	
Account Executive	Public relations consultant	
Account Manager	public relations account manager	
Associate	Senior Account Manager	
Director	Senior associate	
Founding member	Senior Consultant	
Junior account executive		
Titles referring to the top manager in the company on board level		**5**
Executive Director: Strategy development	Managing Director	
Titles referring to specifically corporate or public affairs:		**6**
Corporate affairs manager	Public affairs manager	
Titles referring to people in the marketing function:		**7**
Assistant General Manager: Marketing	Head of brands	
Brand manager	Marketing assistant	
Customer care	Marketing coordinator	
Customer response centre manager	Marketing manager	
Deputy marketing manager	National marketing manager	
Group marketing coordinator	Sales and marketing assistant	
Titles referring to people in the human resources function:		**8**
Divisional Human resources manager	Manager: Human Resources and supporting services	
Group HR executive	Manager: Human resources administration	
Human Resources manager	Manager: staffing & industrial psychological services	
Human Resources controller	Payroll administrator	
Human Resources development practitioner	Payroll and Human Resources administrator	
Human Resources officer	Quality and human development manager	
Human Resources specialist	Quality and human resources management	
Human Resources Superintendent: Communications	Recruitment and industrial relations manager	
Human resources and payroll manager		
Human Resources Manager		
Human resources practitioner		
Manager: Human resources and corporate affairs		
Sourcing specialist		
Titles referring to people in the finance function:		**9**
Financial Director	Group accountant	
Financial manager	Group financial manager	

Titles		Code
Titles referring to people in the combined marketing and communication function:		**10**
Marketing and communications manager	Marketing and promotions officer	
Marketing and communications consultant	Marketing communications manager	
	Marketing public relations coordinator	
Titles referring to people in general management functions:		**11**
Branch director	Group facilities manager and public relations	
Company secretary	Head of business development	
Corporate development manager	Project coordinator	
General manager		
Titles referring to people in the combined marketing and human resources function: Marketing / HR director		**12**

4.3.4.7. Validity and reliability

Before continuing with a discussion on data analysis, it is relevant to first discuss the validity and reliability of the questionnaires.

Although it can be argued that reliability and validity are related, the one is not a guarantee of the other (Hayes, 2005:25; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:59). Therefore both reliability and validity needs to be considered when discussing the use of questionnaires in research (Hayes, 2005:25).

Validity points to the ability of the measurement to measure the concept that it is suppose to measure (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:65; Hayes, 2005:25). Specifically in instances where a researcher develops new measures, as in this study, it is very important that the measure actually measures the concept in question (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:66).

Face validity is the easiest to achieve, by examining on face value if the measure does measure the concept at hand. From there construct validity, relating the measurement logically back to the theoretical framework, can also be established (Babbie, 2004:144; Hayes, 2005:26, 28; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:58-59). Content validity, the degree to which a measure covers the range of meanings included within the concept also becomes important (Babbie, 2004:145; Hayes, 2005:27). In this study face and construct validity were obtained by the questionnaire being checked by an expert in the field, and stringently keeping tags on the relationship of questions to constructs (see section 4.3.4.2.).

Validity can not be determined through statistical analysis (Hayes, 2005:30). Validity in this study was enhanced by triangulating the research findings from the questionnaires with the findings of the interviews. This is known as methodological triangulation, as the phenomenon is examined from different *viewpoints* (methods). This research method is argued to be specifically suited for studies in a complex environment or discipline, such as public relations (Decrop, 1999:158; Le Roux, 2005:300-317). The reason for this view is that methodological triangulation can assist the researcher in better understanding the specific complexities, nuances and even diverse viewpoints on a phenomenon (Decrop, 1999:157-158; Hargie & Tourish, 2000:91; Mangan *et al.*, 2004:568-569; Olsen, 2004:1, 3; see section 4.3.1.).

In summary then, internal validity pertains to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the study in order to be confident in discovering the truth – where the truth is determined by a research design that account for all the influences on the phenomena being studied (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:103; Du Plooy, 2002:84). In this study the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts are clearly defined (see table 4.3 to 4.5). The resulting construction of reliable measuring instruments, were furthermore first tested qualitatively, before being applied quantitatively (see section 4.3.1.). Thus the methodological triangulation also added to internal validity. In addition, the sampling method, by not only including professional body members, but all practitioners in top performing organisations, also added to internal validity (see section 4.3.4.1.; ref. Du Plooy, 2002:85).

External validity refers to the study's generalisability – with other words, to what extent the findings of the study are applicable to other contexts or practitioners not used as respondents in the study (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:104-105). Once again the sampling method used, as well as the fact that the research conducted within *real-world* settings, added to external validity. Also important to note is the fact that this study only claims to be generalisable within the population selected (see section 4.3.4.1.).

Reliability is the consistent ability of the measurement instrument (for instance a questionnaire) to generate similar answers from a similar group of respondents (Babbie, 2004:141; Bryman & Cramer, 1997:63; Du Plooy, 2002:121; Hair *et al.*, 2006:102; Hayes, 2005:25; Robson, 2002:101).

Within quantitative data, reliability can be measured by calculating the Crönbach alpha coefficient (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:63; Du Plooy, 2002:121; see section 4.3.4.8.3.).

Babbie (2004:141) argues that reliability does not ensure accuracy any more than precision does. Therefore it is important to ensure that the answers are asked correctly and data is captured correctly. However incorrect answers or capturing the data incorrectly would be imprecise, but also leads to the questionnaire to *seem* unreliable. In coding the questionnaire data, intercoder reliability becomes relevant. In this instance the researcher coded the questionnaire and captured the data in order to eliminate any coding misunderstandings (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:65). Spot checks were also made on the data to ensure the correct capturing and coding and to enhance precision.

4.3.4.8. Data analysis

Data analysis of the questionnaire data was used to provide answers to Specific research questions two, three, four and five:

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 3

How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

Specific research question 5

What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

The questionnaire data was analysed with the assistance of Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University. Both the programs Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007) were used to determine descriptive statistics, correlations and differentiations, reliability scores and to do factor analysis. In order to answer Specific research question five, structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted by using the

software program AMOS (SPSS Inc., 2009). Missing values were excluded from the analysis, which means that where reported, n-values could differ.

4.3.4.8.1. Descriptive statistics

Due to the volume of data collected, descriptive statistics was firstly used to reduce the data for ease of interpretation (Babbie, 2004:443; Bryman & Cramer, 1997:69; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:205). This included frequency distributions, which shows the number or proportion of cases or occurrences for each option in a question (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:69; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994:206). The descriptive statistics further included the calculation of n-values, means (hypothetical values that show the centre of the distribution), standard deviations (which shows the spread of data), and minimum and maximum values (Field, 2005:738, 745).

The descriptive statistics are used to partly answer Specific research question two and five, and are reported on in chapters six and seven where applicable.

4.3.4.8.2. Correlations and differentiations

In order to partly answer Specific research questions two and three, the relationships between variables, specifically correlations and differences between variables, were established (ref. Konstantopoulos & Hedges, 2004:283).

When considering correlations and differentiation statistics, it is important to take statistical and practical significance into account. Statistical significance indicates the confidence level of statistical results. With other words that the result indicated has not occurred by chance (Field, 2005:25; StatSoft Inc., 2010; Steyn, H.S., 2009:1). Statistical significance is indicated by the p-value, and this value should be less than 0.05 in order to be considered statistical significant (StatSoft Inc., 2010; Steyn, H.S., 2009:1).

Statistical significance alone, however, does not indicate that the finding is important or can be used for decision-making (Steyn, H.S., 2009:1). To determine the importance of the finding in practice, practical significance is used. Practical significance is interpreted as effect size indexes (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:78; Steyn, H.S., 2009). In this study effect size is indicated by Spearman's and Eta coefficients of correlation, and to measure differences, Cohen's *d* in the case of dependant t-tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests and the w-value when referring to cross-tabulations.

- ***Correlations***

"Correlation is a bivariate measure of association (strength) of the relationship between two variables" (Garson, 2008). Depending on the type of data to be analysed both Spearman's coefficient of correlation and Eta coefficient of correlation were used in this study. In correlating:

- Interval (ranked) to interval, or ordinal to ordinal, or interval to ordinal data, Spearman's coefficient of correlation was used (Calkins, 2005b; Garson, 2008). For the purposes of this study Spearman's coefficient of correlation was used to indicate correlations between questions 1-29 and 32. Spearman's coefficient of correlation is known to make fewer assumptions about variables and can be used in a wider variety of contexts specifically between ordinal scales (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:184; Reinard, 1998:292, 297).
- Interval to interval, interval to ratio, or ratio to ratio data, Eta coefficient of correlation was used (Reinard, 1998:292). Correlations between the data of questions 30 and 33 and between questions 30 and 33 and the other data obtained (questions 1-29 and 32), was calculated by means of Eta coefficient of correlation. Eta indicates the correlation between data in nonlinear relationships (Calkins, 2005a; Garson, 2008).

The "measures of correlation indicate both the strength and the direction of the relationship between a pair of variables" (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:172), which allows the researcher to identify changes in one variable that are associated with changes in other variables (Babbie, 2004:90; Field, 2005:130). A positive correlation means that higher value on one variable will indicate a higher value on the other variable. A negative correlation means that a higher value on one variable will indicate a lower value on the other variable (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:174-175; Field, 2005:130; Hayes, 2005:69).

Furthermore, the correlation coefficient shows the strength of a relationship between variables (Field, 2005:745), where a higher value will reflect a stronger association (Hayes, 2005: 69). The computed coefficient will vary between -1 and +1 (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:184), with values closer to 1 indicating a stronger correlation (Garson, 2008). It is important, however, to note that a correlation does not indicate a causal relationship between the two variables, "… but it is one criterion of causality" (Babbie, 2004:90).

In both the Spearman and Eta results, there are no definitive indications on which there is substantial consensus on the readings for large, medium and small correlations (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:178). Cohen and Holliday (1982) (in Bryman & Cramer, 1997:178) suggests

that 0.19 and below constitute a very low correlation; 0.20 to 0.39 low; 0.40 to 0.69 modest; 0.70 to 0.89 high; and 0.90 to 1 very high correlations. For the behavioural and social sciences, and purposes of this study, Spearman's correlation coefficients and the Eta correlation coefficients, was interpreted as follows (Cohen, 1988:79-80; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:78):

- r = 0.1 – 0.29 low / small correlation
- r = 0.3 – 0.49 moderate / medium correlation
- r ≥ 0.5 high / large correlation

Only correlation coefficients which were statistically significant at the p<0.001 level, and practically significant at the 0.300 or greater value, were reported on in chapters six and seven.

- ***Differentiations***

To determine differences, or amount of variation between two means calculated from within the sample, dependent t-tests were used for interval and ratio data (Field, 2005:288-289, 728). When calculating t-tests the following are reported:

- t: t-value that indicates to what extent there is a difference between the means (Field, 2005:728).
- p: The p-value indicates statistical significance, with p≤0.05 indicating a small, p≤0.01 a medium and p≤0.001 a large statistical significance (Cohen, 1988).
- d: Practical significance of the t-test is indicated by the d-value, where d=0.2 indicates a small, d=0.5 a medium and d=0.8 a large effect (Cohen, 1998:21-26).

In this study only t-tests with a p-value of equal or smaller than 0.001 and a d-value of greater than 0.3 were reported where applicable in chapters six and seven.

In cases where multiple comparisons (more than two categories of groups) are made, a significant Kruskal-Wallis test H-value indicates that one group is significantly different from another (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007:655; Rublík, 2001:37). In this study this test is used for instance in determining the differentiations between *actual* role performed, which are three categories or groups, and other data. The following are reported when a Kruskal-Wallis test is done:

- H: H-value that indicates the extent of difference between the groups (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007:655).
- p: The p-value indicates statistical significance, with p≤0.05 indicating a small, p≤0.01 a medium and p≤0.001 a large statistical significance (Cohen, 1988).

In order to determine practical significance, The Mann-Whitney test for each of the differentiations are determined, which delivers a Z-value (Field, 2005:525, 533). This value is then used to calculate the d-value[16] which indicates practical significance, where d=0.2 indicates a small, d=0.5 a medium and d=0.8 a large effect (Cohen, 1998:21-26).

In this study only t-tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests with a p-value of equal or smaller than 0.05 and a resulting d-value of greater than 0.2 were reported where applicable in chapters six and seven.

In order to then further understand the possible differential trends in the data, cross-tabulations were done. Cross-tabulations indicate "… the number of cases that fall into each combination of categories" (Field, 2005:706). Where cross-tabulations were used, the effect size (w) were used (Steyn, H.S., 2009:41-42) to determine practical significance. The interpretation is similar to the d-value in t-tests, where a w-value of 0.1 indicates a small effect, a value of 0.3 a medium effect and a value of 0.5 a large effect (Steyn, H.S., 2009:45-46). Where applicable, cross-tabulations with a w-value of 0.1 and higher were reported on in chapters six and seven. In the applicable cases, where another statistical test did not determine the statistical significance before the cross-tabulation was made, the p-value is used to indicate statistical significance, with $p \leq 0.05$ indicating a small, $p \leq 0.01$ a medium and $p \leq 0.001$ a large statistical significance (Cohen, 1988).

4.3.4.8.3. Reliability calculations

In order to determine to some extent whether the questionnaire provided consistent results from a similar group of respondents, the reliability of the questions testing the various constructs was measured by calculating the Crönbach alpha coefficient (Du Plooy, 2002:121; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:500).

Typically a Crönbach alpha of more than 0.6 or preferably 0.7 are considered good and a Crönbach alpha closer to 0.9, excellent (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:500; Hair *et al.*, 2006:137). However, Field (2005:668) warns that the number of items can influence the Crönbach alpha coefficient. For instance a higher Crönbach alpha for more items tested does not necessarily point to a better measure, compared to a lower Crönbach alpha of, for instance, 0.2, which

[16] *Z divided by the square root of n will equal the d-value (Field, 2005:532).*

can be considered good when only a few items are tested for reliability (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2002:500).

The Crönbach alpha was calculated to test the reliability of questions pertaining to constructs and is reported on in chapters 6 and 7, where applicable.

4.3.4.8.4. Factor analysis

"Factor analysis enables us to assess the *factorial validity* of the questions … by telling us the extent to which they seem to be measuring the same concepts or variables" (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:176). Factor analysis refers to a number of related statistical techniques that identify the minimal number of factors structuring a concept, in order to reduce the complexity of a questionnaire to a more limited number of factors (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:276-277; Field, 2005:619; Hair *et al.*, 2006:104). Factor analysis is reported in a correlation matrix table, with the percentage of variance explained by the factors reported.

Factor analysis can be done to confirm the findings against a theoretical suggestion, or can be used exploratory (Bryman & Cramer, 1997:277; Field, 2005:619; Hair *et al.*, 2006:104-105). When used exploratory, the variables are examined without being tested against a theoretical suggestion and is used "… where links between the observed and latent variables are unknown or uncertain" (Byrne, 2001:5).

Confirmatory factors analysis is used when there is knowledge on the underlying latent variable structure. Based on knowledge of theory or empirical research, relations are postulated (Byrne, 2001:6). One can then test if the number of factors identified correlate with those stated in theory.

Both confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis was used in this study to determine if the questions did test the constructs at hand. The results of confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis as used in this study are reported on in chapters six and seven.

Factor rotation can also be used in the factor analysis of the data and are in some instances specifically suggested as it simplifies the data structure to create a better fit of the data, gives a more meaningful factor solution and improve interpretation (Hair *et al.*, 2006:123, 149, 201; Field, 2005:619, 634-635). The VARIMAX factor rotation, as used in this study, is considered "… superior to other orthogonal factor rotation methods in achieving a simplified factor

structure" (Hair *et al.*, 2006:104; ref. Field, 2005:636). In this type of orthogonal factor rotation factors are kept independent while rotated (Field, 2005:635).

The factor loadings indicate whether factors can be grouped together. Although Field (2005:637) posit that factor loadings of 0.3 and above are considered important, other authors only consider factor loadings of 0.5 as practically significant (Hair *et al.*, 2006:128-129). A factor loading of ±0.7 or more are considered a very good indication of a good structure (Hair *et al.*, 2006:128-129). The researcher should also be aware that the fewer variables included in the calculation the higher the loading should be, in order to be considered as significant.

4.3.4.8.5. Structural equation modelling (SEM)

In answering Specific research question five:

> ***Specific research question 5***
> *What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?*

It was argued that SEM would be the most appropriate method of determining the answer to this question as it would make use of a combination of statistical techniques to determine the simultaneous relationships and underlying structure among several variables (Babbie, 2004:416).

The Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, pooled their knowledge of SEM with the researcher's knowledge of the theory, in order to create a number of possible models. It is not suggested that the developed models are the *only possible models* to describe the phenomena investigated. The models developed as part of this study open a conversation toward the research and development of *a single model* that describes the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

- ***What does SEM entail?***

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical modelling method, that by using various statistical methods such as exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, multiple regression and path analysis, can take into account complexities such as relationships between variables and the structure of the data, to deliver a model (Byrne, 2001:6; Hair *et al.*, 2006:705, 710, 711; Raykov & Mels, 2007:636; Stapleton & Leite, 2005:64; StatSoft Inc., 2008; Stoelting, 2002). Therefore interactions, correlations and variations between latent and dependent variables can be calculated (Garson, 2009), thereby representing more than a single relationship between variables at a time (Hair *et al.*, 2006:705). As Byrne (2001:7) stated: "Statistical models provide an efficient and convenient way of describing the latent structure underlying a set of observed variables. Expressed either diagrammatically, or mathematically via a set of equations, such models explain how the observed and latent variables are relations to one another."

SEM, due to the variance of statistical methods used, is seen as a further development on general linear modelling as it can make more flexible assumptions and thus create more realistic models (Garson, 2009; SPSS, 2009). "SEM may be used as a more powerful alternative to multiple regression, path analysis, factor analysis, time series analysis, and analysis of covariance" (Garson, 2009).

Although used in the Excellence Study (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:508-512), SEM have not been a widely used statistical method in corporate communication science, but are specifically used in fields that deal with a complex set of constructs (latent variables) with underlying variables (observed variables) that influence the phenomena. SEM is useful as it can reflect relationships between observed variables (survey data, actual measured indicators) and latent variables (not directly observed and consisting of observed variables that indicate the construct) (Byrne, 2001:4-5; Hair *et al.*, 2006:708; SPSS, 2009). The fields where SEM are mainly used include the social sciences, behavioural sciences, educational sciences, marketing, and social work fields (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988:411; Babin *et al.*, 2008:279; Guo *et al.*, 2008:1556-1574; Raykov & Mels, 2007:645; Stapleton & Leite, 2005:642). However, since corporate communication science also deals with similar complex situations and scenarios as the above fields, this method could be of great value for the science.

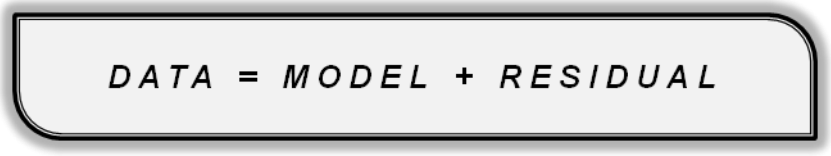
Some authors such as Byrne (2001:3) and Garson (2009) argue that SEM is usually used as a confirmatory rather than exploratory statistical approach which should test hypothesis. These authors argue that only when the theoretical model has been found to fit insufficiently, a new model should be conceptualised (Byrne, 2001:6, 7; Garson, 2009).

However, according to Raykov and Mels (2007:637) SEM was initially seen as specifically useful for theory development and testing, but later also for identifying possible points of intervention in prevention studies. Authors such as Anderson and Gerbing (1988:411, 422) further argued that since SEM can also be used to develop new models, it can be applied within pure exploratory research. For instance, when testing a model, the researcher will need to modify and made adjustments to the model. This implies that a new model is thus generated and therefore an exploratory approach followed (Byrne, 2001:7-8).
Anderson and Gerbing (1988:411) agrees with Byrne above, that the difference between exploratory and confirmatory SEM analysis is "… that of an ordered progression." Since the models never fit perfectly, there is always a step of re-specification and re-estimation involved, which could also be seen as exploratory (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988:411-412). Therefore Anderson and Gerbing (1988:412) argue: "These two approaches to structural equation modelling, then, can be thought of as a complementary choice that depends on the purpose of the research."

One should, however, keep in mind that a perfect model fit is highly unlikely for various reasons:

- StatSoft Inc. (2008) states that it is not reasonable to expect the structural model to fit perfectly, as a structural model with linear relations is only an approximation and "The world is unlikely to be linear".
- The SEM process also requires researchers to use their own theoretical insight and judgment in resolving model fit problems (Garson, 2009).
- The easy to use software, such as AMOS, has made SEM available to more researchers, which might not grasp the complexities of the modelling technique and therefore it could result in less accurate models and findings (Babin *et al.*, 2008:280).

Byrne (2001:7), Field (2005:7) and StatSoft Inc. (2008) described the less than perfect model fit as stating that the data will always deliver a model plus some residual, where the residual could point to errors, lack of correlations or variations which result in the model having a less than perfect fit.



Although a model might not fit perfectly, it should be useful in reality and offer some explanation of trends (StatSoft Inc., 2008). On the other hand a well fitted model should not be seen as the only or ultimate correct model, as it is possible that another model could fit the data with the same or even better fit (StatSoft Inc., 2008; Stoelting, 2002).

In traditional SEM where it is used to test the fit of an already existing model, a five step approach is followed (Stoelting, 2002) starting with stating the model, determining the variables and their linkages for the model (model identification), then model estimation, testing the model fit and lastly model manipulation. However, Anderson and Gerbing (1988:417) suggest a two-step approach specifically for use in exploratory research which consist of the following steps:

- Estimation of the model
- Re-specification of the model

This two-step approach allows for the assessment of any structural model that could give an acceptable fit (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988:422).

The two-step approach suggested by Anderson & Gerbing (1988:417) is very similar to the two-step approach later offered by Garson (2009) for confirmatory SEM. In this instance step one includes the validation of the model where one tries to fit a developed model based on theory and second where changes are made to fit the structural model better.

SEM requires samples of 100 or more depending on the number of constructs and items measuring the constructs, as well as communalities between items (Hair *et al.*, 2006: 742; ref. Barrett, 2007:821). For the purposes of this study the sample size of 262 was considered sufficient to make use of SEM.

- ***Symbols used in SEM***

When reporting on the model created and tested certain symbols are used in the diagram to indicate specific aspects (Byrne, 2001:8-9; Hair *et al.*, 2006:714-716; StatSoft Inc., 2008; Stoelting, 2002):

- Ovals indicate latent variables, which can be seen as the constructs tested through various questions or observed variables.
- Rectangular boxes indicate the observed variables directly tested through the questions asked to respondents.
- Curved lines indicate a correlation relationship between constructs where the constructs are correlated but not dependent on one another.

- Direct lines with single arrowheads indicate the impact of one variable on another, in other words regression coefficients.

  For both curved and direct lines: These lines "… can be interpreted much like correlation coefficients, although the direction of the arrows indicate the most likely direction of cause and effect" (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511).
- Lines with double arrowheads represent covariances or correlations between variables.
- Measurement error associated with an observed variable is indicated by a circle. "… variation in an item that is not explained by its association with the theoretical construct measured" (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:509).

In all cases the measurements are indicated together with the appropriate symbols.

- ***Steps taken to complete SEM in this study***

In order to create the model for this study the following steps were followed:

- By using the findings of the literature study, and the analysed data from the interviews and questionnaires, the researcher did concept mapping – the graphical display of concepts and their interrelations, useful in the formulation of theory (Babbie, 2004:381). This suggested model included all five levels of variables on the practitioner. This large and intricate model, however, was too complex to test in total. As a compromise, a model for each level of variables was attempted.
- In each case the questions pertaining to each construct was evaluated as well as relationships or variances between the elements through a combination of statistical methods. Through a method of keeping good model fit and logical application of the model in practice in mind, questions or even in some cases constructs could be eliminated from the model in order of importance. For instance it was decided to eliminate constructs with regression weights where $p>0.05$, and a standardised regression weight of $r<0.300$, but only if it increased the model fit and made logical sense.
- Each of the five models was adjusted until the researcher and Statistical Consultation Services were comfortable with the result. The result was five models representing each level of variables influencing the practitioner contributing to organisational performance.
- From there the five models representing each level of variables were combined to form one single integrated model indicating the strength of, and interrelationships

between variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

- Once again the integrated model was adjusted until the researcher and Statistical Consultation Services were comfortable with the result and a relative good fit was obtained.

- ***What is considered a good fit for an SEM model?***

Since SEM does not suggest that only one model is the perfect fit to a solution, but rather that a suggested model can be one solution to the problem, there has to be some kind of indication of how well the model fits the data. How well the model fits the data and variables are referred to as the Goodness-of-Fit measures (Campbell, 2003:9; Field, 2005:732; Hair *et al.*, 2006:708).

There are a few Goodness-of-Fit measures that are widely applied which include, amongst others, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI); Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI); Normed Fit Index (NFI); Comparative Fit Index (CFI); and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) (Campbell, 2003:9).

The researcher applied the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) measure, where the results should be between 0 and 1 with a result of 0.9 or higher indicating a good fit (Garson, 2009; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747-749; Nortje, 2003:24-25). CFI can, however, be sensitive to sample size.

Therefore Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was also considered as a goodness-of-fit indicator in this study, as RMSEA is least affected by sample size (Garson, 2009) and can accommodate a large number of observed variables (Byrne, 2001:84-85; Hair *et al.*, 2006:748). RMSEA is considered one of the best criteria in covariance structure modelling (Byrne, 2001:84). Many authors argued that a RMSEA of 0.08 indicates a reasonably good fit (Byrne, 2001:85; Campbell, 2003:9; Garson, 2009) and values higher than 0.10 indicate a poor fit (Byrne, 2001:85). However, according to Hair *et al.* (2006:748): “The question of what is a ‘good’ RMSEA value is debatable but typically values are below 0.10 for most acceptable models.”

RMSEA indicates the average lack of fit per degree of freedom, therefore confidence intervals are also included. A smaller or narrower confidence interval, indicates good precision fit of the model within the population (Byrne, 2001:85). Also, RMSEA is normally reported with its confidence intervals. In a well-fitting model, the lower 90% confidence limit

includes or is very close to 0, while the upper limit is less than 0.08. As Campbell (2003:9) stated: “The RMSEA estimates the overall amount of error; it is a function of the fitting function value relative to the degrees of freedom”.

Lastly, the researcher should not only consider the goodness-of-fit indices alone when determining the value of the model, as even a model that is seen to fit badly, can still be practically useful (Byrne, 2001:88). Therefore the theoretical, statistical and practical considerations should be taken into account when determining the usefulness of a model (Byrne, 2001:88; Hair *et al.*, 2006:751).

4.3.5. Challenges

The challenges in the quantitative stage of the research were twofold. Firstly, the length of the questionnaire was a worrying factor, although all possible steps were taken to create a questionnaire that tested all the constructs at hand and that did not take too much time to complete (see section 4.3.4.3.).

The second major challenge was to collect the data from respondents. Public relations practitioners were not negative toward the questionnaire or research, but had limited time available for activities other than their work. Therefore many did not have the time to complete the questionnaire. This was dealt with by enlarging the sample and following up with respondents (see section 4.3.4.1. and 4.3.4.4.).

Another possible challenge, which did not surface in the pre-test, but had to be considered was respondents’ will to answer the questionnaire with social desirable answers (Johnson & Turner, 2003:306). This was proactively addressed by making it clear that there are no right or wrong answers in the questionnaire in the introduction section on the questionnaire. Furthermore the fact that there are so many different views on the field, eliminated the possibility of socially accepted answers. For instance, when asked if they had a mentor in communication, respondents could answer freely, as there is no suggested norm to this question. Or if asked if you had experience outside the communication discipline, practitioners could answer at will, as once again, there are no set idea of experience the practitioner should or shouldn’t have outside corporate communication.

4.3.6. Personal Observations

When returning the questionnaires by email some respondents included a few comments. The comments mainly centred on the need for research on the profession such as the current study, as well as the need for findings of this study to be shared with the practitioners. The respondents seemed to be very positive towards the research.

4.4. ETHICS OF RESEARCH

Some ethical considerations need to be kept in mind when doing social sciences research. First, voluntary participation is crucial. The participants should have a choice to participate in the research, as they do not require the research and it disrupts their routine, and asks them information that are personal and sometimes not even known by their colleagues (Babbie, 2004:28, 63; Baxter & Babbie, 2004:86). In this study the respondents were free to choose to participate or not.

Second, no harm or embarrassment should come to the respondents after participating or during participation in the research and this is ensured by treating the respondents' replies as confidential (Babbie, 2004:29, 64, 65; Baxter & Babbie, 2004:88). In this study where respondents might be sensitive about some of the questions, confidentiality was of utmost importance. Due to the types of questions being asked it might be possible to identify people based on their responses, such as race, age, position, and so forth. Confidentiality was ensured by only the researcher receiving, numbering and capturing the questionnaire data.

The researcher should also be careful not to create expectations for the respondents when introducing them to the research (Babbie, 2004:64). By completing the questionnaire the respondents had to understand that the situation within their environment or career would not change.

Researchers also have an ethical obligation in the analysis and reporting of the data (Babbie, 2004:68) in ensuring that the reporting is true. This was ensured as Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University assisted the researcher in data analysis and checked the reporting of data.

4.5. CONCLUSION

The research strategy, design and particulars of the empirical phase of the study were discussed in this chapter. Specific attention was paid to the methods of data generation, capturing and analysis, with particular mention of challenges and strategies used to overcome these challenges. Of particular interest is the motivation of the use of structural equation modelling in this study, as it is not a method commonly used in the communication sciences.

The following chapters will focus on reporting the results from the data collected. Firstly the findings of the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews will be discussed, followed by quantitative data describing the respondents. Thereafter the quantitative data results on the perceptions of the practitioners on variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW RESULTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the approach to and the method of obtaining data to answer the research questions were described. These included the research strategy, design, population, and data-analysis methods used.

This chapter will focus on the results from the first part of the research. This includes the results from the semi-structured interviews with corporate communication practitioners and the chairpersons of the two professional bodies (PRISA and IABC), which will provide qualitative insight into Specific research questions two, four and, to some extent, five.

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

Specific research question 5

What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

The semi-structured interviews focused on exploring the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance as experienced and interpreted by the respondents. The interviews were furthermore used to confirm the variables identified in literature, as well as to determine any possible variables not mentioned in literature.

The respondents referred to *good practitioners* as those who contribute to organisational performance and *not-so-good practitioners* (less well-performing practitioners) as those who *do not* contribute to organisational performance. Where respondents answered in Afrikaans, English translations are given.

5.2. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH RESPONDENTS WHO ARE PRACTISING PRACTITIONERS

As previously mentioned (see section 4.3.3.1.), four semi-structured interviews were conducted with practicing corporate communication practitioners. One black male practitioner, one black female practitioner, and two white female practitioners were purposefully selected to participate as information-rich respondents.

A brief overview of each individual respondent's background and viewpoint will be given, followed by a thorough report on the findings per research construct (variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance) as defined in literature (see table 3.9).

5.2.1. Findings of Semi-structured Interviews with Practitioners: Overview per Respondent

5.2.1.1. Respondent one

Respondent one is a black male working in the mining industry as Group Communication Manager. He has worked both nationally and internationally in corporate communication within various industries, from religion to journalism and lobbying. Respondent one's educational qualifications were not discussed during the interview.

The respondent is very relationship orientated in his approach to corporate communication. He feels strongly that practitioners should understand the "… universe of the stakeholder …", which includes having situational knowledge (knowledge of human rights, business and

industry knowledge, knowledge of protocol[17], and the like). Within this approach the respondent also focused on creating dialogic communication with an emphasis on listening so that the practitioner could act as a change agent. The respondent strongly devalued experience and education outside the relationship model.

The respondent viewed the greatest threats to the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance as (i) organisational politics, where managers could marginalise a practitioner through their statements and actions, and (ii) affirmative action. He argued that affirmative action was an attempt at "… levelling the playing field for all people". However, the necessary skills to obtain success were not transferred to the affirmative action appointment in the process.

In general, the respondent was optimistic about the future and the contribution that practitioners could make to organisational performance. He strongly suggested that the responsibility to gain knowledge and apply it successfully to corporate communication challenges lies with the practitioner.

Upon analysing the respondent's views, it was found that the respondent mainly focused on variables at the individual-, organisational-, industry- and country-levels. Minimal focus was given to variables at the professional-level, although they were briefly mentioned.

This respondent's suggestions match what has been stated in literature. Four noteworthy aspects are:

- The focus on situational knowledge, which is categorised as industry knowledge in section 3.5 of the literature study;
- the importance given to communication experience and education within the relational paradigm, as suggested by Boynton (2006:325-330) and Plowman (2005:131);
- the influence of the business environment (organisational and industry environment) on defining the corporate communication function, as discussed in section 3.7.;
- the professional legacy of corporate communication (see section 3.8.1.); and

[17] Protocol can be viewed as the guidelines considered important, which all individuals must follow as a standard within a culture or an organisation so as not to offend others (BusinessDictionary.com, 2010; Obisakin, 2007:3-5).

- the view that the responsibility to contribute to organisational performance lies with the practitioner, as suggested by various authors in section 3.5.3.1. (Dozier *et al.,* 1995:85, 86; Moss *et al.*, 2000:87; Woodall & Smith, 2003:18).

5.2.1.2. Respondent two

Respondent two is a white female currently working in an industrial environment. This respondent has had experience in other industries as she had worked in corporate communication. She was reading for an M.Com degree in Communication Management.

This respondent viewed communication as a strategic function that offers the greatest contribution to organisational performance when the practitioner provides strategic input into the organisation. This respondent argues that it is practitioners' responsibility to ensure their contribution to organisational performance by applying and thereby exhibiting their skills and expertise to management.

Furthermore, the practitioner is viewed as the person with the ability and responsibility to turn negative situations or limitations into opportunities. Even when females are downgraded in the business environment, which she saw as the greatest limitation to the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, the practitioner was expected to responsibly manage the situation.

Respondent two focused mainly on variables at the individual and organisational-levels that impacted on practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. Some industry-, country- and professional-level variables were also briefly mentioned.

The respondent's input strongly related to literature, with specific focus on the following aspects:

- The responsibility of the practitioner in managing situations that have a negative influence on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, which was discussed in section 3.5.3.1. (ref. Dozier *et al.,* 1995:85, 86; Moss *et al.*, 2000:87; Woodall & Smith, 2003:18);
- the gender discrimination within the discipline as suggested by Grunig *et al.* (2001:172, 180-181, 310) (see section 3.4.1.3.); and
- the importance of corporate communication as a strategic function, as implied by the conceptualisation and verification of the need for the role of strategist in South Africa

(Everett, 2006:101-103; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18; see section 2.2.4.2.1.).

5.2.1.3. Respondent three

Respondent three, a mature black female currently working as a communication consultant, has extensive experience in corporate communication in various industries. She comes from a background in journalism, and then moved into corporate communication. At the time of the study she was reading for an M.Com degree in Communication Management.

The respondent emphasised the importance for the practitioner to have excellent people-skills that do not allow for any prejudices, and an environment where relationship building can take place. She viewed communication as a discipline that could strategically add to the organisation by focussing on relationship building.

The respondent highlighted the importance of education for corporate communication practitioners. From her own experience, the respondent argued that education, through professional bodies or educational institutions, should be available to practitioners who come from other disciplines and choose to enter the profession at a later stage in their lives.

She focused on individual-, organisational-, country- and professional-level variables. Variables that were industry specific did not receive much attention.

This respondent highlighted the following aspects, which were regarded as being important according to literature:

- The focus on the strategic role of corporate communication within a relationship approach to corporate communication (ref. Boynton, 2006:325-330; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Le Roux, 2004:42; Plowman, 2005:131; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009:424); and
- the accessibility to further quality corporate communication education for practicing practitioners or practitioners entering the profession from another discipline, as suggested in section 3.4.2.1 (ref. Dozier *et al.*, 1995:66; IABC, 2009a; PRISA, 2009a).

5.2.1.4. Respondent four

Respondent four, a white female, is a highly regarded corporate communication practitioner who has lectured corporate communication and has international and local experience working and doing research in corporate communication within various industries. She was acting as a consultant and had her own business at the time of the interview. She preferred to work across industries to deliver strategic communication services that focus very strongly on the triple-bottom line. Respondent four had completed an M.Com. degree in Communication Management cum laude.

The respondent holds a strong strategic view of communication and believes that communication contributes most to the organisation when practiced on this higher level. She specifically argued that business knowledge, and the "…correct type of education and experience" (that within the strategic role of corporate communication) would yield the greatest corporate communication contribution to the organisation. The respondent argued that the practitioner should be a *go-getter* who takes responsibility for making a contribution to the organisation.

After analysis it was found that the respondent felt that variables at the individual-, organisational-, country- and professional-levels would enable practitioners to make a contribution to organisational performance.

Most important to this respondent, in accordance with literature, were the following:

- The focus on the strategic role of corporate communication, as suggested by, amongst others, Everett and Steyn (2006:25-26), and Steyn and Puth (2000:17-18), combined with business knowledge as suggested by Ferreira and Verwey (2004:94);
- the value of education and experience within the strategic framework for corporate communication, similar to the views of Yeo and Sriramesh (2009:424), and Le Roux (2004:42), to name but a few; and
- the inclination of practitioners to accept responsibility for their contribution to organisational performance, as argued by various authors as set out in section 3.5.3.1. (Dozier *et al.,* 1995:85, 86; Moss *et al.*, 2000:87; Woodall & Smith, 2003:18).

5.2.1.5. Synopsis: Overview per respondent

It is important to note that the respondents viewed the variables influencing the corporate communication practitioner in contributing to organisational performance as one large, single

category of variables, and not as separate, clearly distinguished categories. In addition, the respondents mainly focused on variables at the individual-level. Three of the respondents reported on variables at organisational and country-levels; two reported on variables at professional-level; and only one mentioned variables at industry-level.

It would seem that the respondents are more familiar with and aware of the variables closer to them, such as variables at the individual-level versus, for instance, variables at the professional-level. One could also suggest that the respondents argued that the variables at an individual-level are more manageable than, for instance, variables at country or professional-levels, and therefore the respondents focused on the more manageable variables that seem closer to the practitioner. This view could explain why the respondents agreed that, although the practitioner may face many challenges, the responsibility lies with the practitioner to ensure his/her contribution to organisational performance. The view that practitioners should take charge of their contribution is supported by literature (see section 3.5.3.1.). However, the respondents placed an even greater emphasis on practitioners taking charge of their contribution to organisational performance.

Another finding was the strong emphasis on the paradigm held by the practitioner as a factor that directly influences the contribution that such a person can make to organisational performance. This implies that practitioners not only need to be able to complete the technical tasks of communication, but should also be able to take a bird's eye view of their work and situation and evaluate these. These strategic and analytical skills – and knowledge of the paradigms – are mostly taught at postgraduate level (see section 3.4.2.1.), which implies that the practitioner should have further tertiary education to successfully contribute to the organisation.

Respondents mentioned the two main paradigms (which correlate strongly), namely the relational and the strategic paradigms of corporate communication. The respondents felt that the practitioner had to practise strategic corporate communication within the relational paradigm to contribute to organisational performance. These paradigms could be argued to be congruent with the Afrocentric worldview (see section 3.4.1.6.). Furthermore, as mentioned above, only tertiary education and experience gained within the relational and strategic worldviews of communication were regarded as sufficient. Both having knowledge and experience within, and adhering to the mentioned paradigms, are suggested as important to the practitioner in literature and coincide with the excellence principles as discussed in section 2.2.3.2.

The semi-structured interview findings with the practitioner respondents will now be reviewed in more detail per level and per construct.

5.2.2. Findings of Semi-structured Interviews with Practitioners: Per Construct

The respondents' interpretations of variables influencing the practtioner in contributing to organisational performance, were categorised according to the framework of variables found in literature (see table 3.9).

5.2.2.1. Individual-level variables

5.2.2.1.1. Personality

While two respondents argued that personality was important for a practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, the other two respondents argued that, even more than personality, emotional maturity is of utmost importance to the practitioner. This is in agreement with the views of Grunig (2008:121) and Yeomans (2007:213) that emotion in the business world is coming to the fore, and should therefore receive attention.

One respondent stated that, on a managerial and strategic level, personality becomes important. Another added that: "… a lot of times it's not what you do, but how you do it". Respondents, however, agreed that although you "… don't have to be smiling all the time … we all differ", one can still be a good practitioner. This description of practitioners' personality traits adds to the description of the *successful practitioner*. It was also made clear that, in accordance with Sjöberg's view (2005:831), a practitioner's attitude could determine his/her performance.

Two respondents made it clear that the practitioner's personality should allow for the person to act as a facilitator or interpreter or as the *go-between* (facilitator) as the practitioner needs to be in contact with people at "… high levels and those on the lowest levels, and every level inbetween". The practitioner should be able to adapt to relate to people from all races, religions and social classes within any environment (such as corporate or community environments), or then be sensitive to other people in accordance with the required personality traits identified by Bhimani (1995: 29), Black (1995: 179) and Rogers (1980: 233) as set out in section 3.4.1.5.

By implication the practitioner's behaviour and personality should enforce each other for the practitioner to gain integrity. This is not only true for the communication practitioner, but also for any other profession: "Yes, but not only in communication" [Translated into Afrikaans: "Ja, maar nie net in kommunikasie nie"].

5.2.2.1.2. Education

All the interviewees agreed that education, specifically *the right type of education* – strategic communication within the relational paradigm – was crucial to enable the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance: "Communication is a platform for relationships … and should be studied as a conversation …" (ref. Boynton, 2006:325-330; Le Roux, 2004:42; Plowman, 2005:131; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009:424). Furthermore, it was highlighted that this type of education needs to be set within the business environment as suggested by Groenewald (1998b:19).

Two respondents specifically indicated that when appointing a practitioner, both education and applicable experience will be taken into account, as education gives the practitioner the insight to understand their experience: "Education brought the answer right on to my table" [In Afrikaans: "Opleiding het die antwoord reguit na my tafel gelei"].

A few problems regarding the corporate communication education of practitioners were mentioned, which are in agreement with the argument as set out in section 3.4.2.1, where the educational needs of the practitioner are discussed. These follow below:

- Lack of the *right type of education*: The respondents argued that practitioners seem not to have the *right* education (they lack understanding of the relationship paradigm) to really make an impact on and therefore focus more on their technical role. It was mentioned that "Most people seem to be very focused on the role of technician and maybe the management role …". This then leads to practitioners being more "… focused at giving information and not being concerned with the relationship".
- The encroachment of education in journalism: One respondent strongly added that as long as education is focused on the theory of journalism, it would have no value for the practitioner. The respondent stated that, "As long as education is very theoretical and hooked to journalism, we are missing the point in terms of education (sic)" [The Afrikaans translation reads as follows: "Solank opleiding … baie teoreties en kop in een mus met joernalistiek is, dink ek ons sit die pot mis in terme van opleiding"].

  To add to this challenge, respondents also mentioned that practitioners who encroach from the journalism arena focus only on channel effectiveness, rather than on

organisational goals: "… a lot of the guys coming from a journalism background … are very focused on channel effectiveness".

- Lecturers lacking business experience: It was mentioned that lecturers in corporate communication are lacking in corporate communication experience, which limits their ability to teach corporate communication. It was stated that "Lecturers do not have corporate [business] experience" [The Afrikaans translation reads as follows: "Lektore het nie korporatiewe ervaring nie …"].
- Limited access to appropriate education for practicing corporate communication practitioners: It was also stated that practitioners should not be limited when they did not have the opportunity to attend a university. In such cases the professional bodies are expected to provide short courses that could equip the practitioner. It was, however, argued that, in essence, practitioners should have a natural predisposition for learning "…even outside formal education". This implies that practitioners need to be committed to aquiring information over and above formal education.

A problem mentioned regarding the education of practitioners in corporate communication, which was not stated in literature (see section 3.4.2.1.), is the following:

- Many advanced corporate communication scholars do not enter the business environment: People who studied communication are not necessarily found in the business environment. One respondent mentioned that those who had completed their Masters degrees after having had some work experience, did well in business, but that those who completed their Masters degrees directly after their Honours degrees often ended up in academia, and never entered the business environment. This tendency could be attributed to the fact that these persons know the theory, but do not have any experience. One of the respondents said that, "There are too many bright-eyed people with theoretical knowledge, and no application skills" [In Afrikaans: "Daar is te veel blink-ogige mense met teorie en geen toepassingswaarde nie"].

  A solution suggested by one respondent included that educational institutions should track their students or use advisory committees to assist in keeping their courses updated and applicable to the business environment.

One respondent had contact with a few, select practitioners who could operate on the strategic level without formal education in communication. It was argued that education is not a prerequisite for all practitioners to be able to contribute to organisational performance. These practitioners, however, focused more on acquiring knowledge about corporate communication and business skills, than on other aspects such as creating shared

expectations with management, building networks and honing their relationship-building skills (ref. Dozier *et al.*, 1995:11; Le Roux, 2004:39).

In summary, the respondents argued that people expect too much from their studies in terms of career development and should rather nurture a continuous-learning attitude.

5.2.2.1.3. Career goals

As was also suggested in section 3.4.3.1., three respondents argued that the practitioner's career goals would influence whether they become practitioners that contribute to organisational performance or not. It is argued that the practitioner's view of what effective or good communication is, and their background and knowledge would determine their career goals. Therefore it would be more important for the practitioner to have a life-long learning focus, as the practitioner's background and knowledge add to what their career goals are.

The respondents also made the point that some practitioners are happy to focus on technical skills only, while others aspire to "… greatness", which implies strategic public relations or a position where the practitioner receives acknowledgement within the organisation: "They [the practitioners] find their niche in the world … and people [the practitioners] are happy with that…".

One respondent, did, however warn that if career goals were to be focused only on the gathering of theory, it would not benefit the practitioner. The respondent stated the following: "For example, the people at CPUT and Tuks don't get anywhere … At this stage I cannot draw any parallel between those that universities deliver and those that excel in the private sector" [In Afrikaans, then: "Byvoorbeeld by CPUT en Tukkies kom die mense nêrens nie … Ek kan nie op hierdie stadium hoegenaamd 'n parallel trek tussen dié wat in universiteite afgelewer word en dié wat in die privaatsektor bo uitkom nie"]. The respondent further stated that ABSA was looking for people in the field of communication, but specifically not people with only qualifications and no experience, since they are only knowledgeable about theory and not streetwise: "People come with bright eyes and talk to us about theory from morning to noon, but they are not streetwise, and do not understand business" [In Afrikaans: "Hierdie ouens kom met blink ogies en vertel vir ons teorie van die more tot die aand maar hulle is nie 'streetwise' nie, en verstaan nie besigheid nie"]. The respondent then went further to imply that even people who completed their degree studies under the best in academia, do not necessarily excel in business.

Career goals were seen to be just as important for a communication practitioner as for any other professional: “Not more or less important as for any other career” [In Afrikaans: “Nie meer of minder belangrik as vir enige ander loopbaan nie”]. One respondent, however, argued that one should keep in mind that career goals are a “… personal thing to set …” and remains a very personal choice that the practitioner needs to make.

There was also agreement that the career goals of *not-so-good practitioners* might not differ from a good practitioner’s career goals. The respondent did, however, add that she did not “… know what the bad [less well performing] practitioners’ goals are, and they often can’t tell you what they want or where they are going … often they can’t tell you what they are trying to do…”.

In summary, as mentioned in section 5.2.2.1.2. above, respondents warned that further studies should not be seen as equal to career development. This argument was not made in literature (see section 3.4.3.1.).

5.2.2.1.4. Gender, or having a certain sexual orientation

In contrast with Grunig *et al.* (2001:22), all four respondents argued that gender or sexual orientation (a feminine orientation) is not a precursor for a practitioner to contribute to organisational performance: “I’m not sure that it [being a practitioner that contributes to organisational performance] is driven by genetic formulation or gender … anybody can cease the opportunity...”. Further: “Anybody of any race, of any background, of any religion can make a good public relations practitioner, as long as they are open-minded, mature and sensitive to [the needs of] other people”. The respondents indicated that knowledge, personality, skills, business knowledge and a keen interest were viewed as more important than gender or a feminine orientation.

It was, however, acknowledged that different people bring nuances to the function because of experiences they have had and, to a certain degree, because of who they are. For example, in the mining environment, which is a tough, male-dominated environment, the respondent stated that “…the kind of person that would heal the rift … is the one that confronts this rough world”.

Some of the respondents did mention gender-specific issues. However, they did not feel very strongly about these issues and offered them as mere comments on some practitioner‘s

perceptions during the interviews. The issues mentioned also seem to contradict one another. The gender specific issues included the following:

- Relationship building comes naturally to females: “I think it’s easier for women, it’s almost natural to do what a communicator does”, while men are more focused on tasks and not people, and therefore battle to multitask (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2001:22).

  This statement contradicts the following view from another respondent, namely that some female managers can be hard and without empathy: “Many women are as hard as a rock … terribly hard managers … with no empathy”, while “The best PR practitioners I know are men” [In Afrikaans: “… dat daar baie vroue was wat klipsteenhard is … terrible harde bestuurders … sy’t geen empatie nie …”, terwyl “Die beste praktisyns wat ek ken, is mans”]. This view was not supported by literature (see section 3.4.1.3.).

- In agreement with Grunig *et al.* (2001:4, 172, 180-181, 310), salaries and career opportunities are still influenced by gender, and gender has a greater influence on the contribution of the practitioner than race. For instance, in some cases men are taken more seriously than women within the South African business environment: It is “… assumed ideas are the man’s idea…”.

  This is opposed to the aforementioned statement and in agreement with with Hutton (2005:82), that there is no stereotyping and thus specific salary differences between men and women in South Africa, although it was proven to be so in the USA. There is “… no reason to believe that”; and “That’s American, definitely not South African” [In Afrikaans, then, “Daar is geen rede om dit te glo nie …”, en “Dis Amerikaans, glad nie Suid-Afrikaans nie”].

A certain gender or sexual orientation is thus not seen to be a prerequisite for a practitioner to be able to contribute to organisational performance. However, it is acknowledged that different people bring different nuances to the function, which is not neccesaily linked to gender or sexual orientation.

5.2.2.1.5. Emotional intelligence

All the respondents agreed that emotional intelligence or maturity is crucial for the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance: “It is the secret of it all … [as]

emotional intelligence and emotional maturity determine how you are going to listen to people". "Emotional maturity is one of the most important characteristics of a practitioner" [In Afrikaans then, "…een van die belangrikste *ingredients* …"]. The respondents also hinted that emotional intelligence is lacking in most practitioners. Emotional maturity is seen as influencing one's style of communication and that practitioners should be mature enough to critically evaluate their own behaviour.

As suggested by Yeomans (2007:213), emotional maturity is, however, viewed as not only important for communication practitioners, but for anyone in a management position.

5.2.2.1.6. Age

Two respondents mentioned age by stating that it had no influence on the practitioner when contributing to organisational performance: "There is not a critical age to be …". Literature also suggested that there is not an ideal age to be within the profession (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:315).

Although "… people say with age comes wisdom ...", the respondents argued that some practitioners can be "… wise beyond their years if given the right exposure at an early enough stage and if the potential is developed". Therefore, "Age and experience should not be seen as the same thing" as some practitioners "… have an open enough mind to learn from other people's experiences" [Translated into Afrikaans: "Ouderdom en ervaring moet jy nie oor dieselfde kam skeer nie" omdat sekere praktisyns "… 'n oop kop het en van ander se ervarings kan leer"]. These comments hence do not support the deduction from literature that age could be related experience in the function, but it does support Le Roux's (2004:39) suggestion that younger practitioners, regardless of experience, are appointed to higher level positions.

Maturity and emotional intelligence, rather than age, were deemed important, unless the practitioner were to be specifically appointed to represent a specific age group for a specific cause.

5.2.2.1.7. Encroachment from a background of journalism

The respondents agreed that there are many corporate communication practitioners who come from the background of journalism. According to them, these practitioners practice corporate communication from a technical, information-giving model where the organisation

feeds stakeholders information. The result is that, "… journalists tend to think communication management is about media management", and tend to not support the stakeholder-relationship paradigm where "… corporate communication now is more than telling stories, its listening to stories …". Such practitioners are seen to need a "… serious mind shift …" as "… people have data already [and that] you can't lie to them".

However, this being said, the respondents agreed that there is a need for someone who can write well within an organisation. Unfortunately this skill then propels them into a powerful position: "There is a position of power given to the good speech writing person, the one who can write for the CEO … people with writing abilities typically have more informal power than the head of the department" [In Afrikaans, then: "… is daar 'n sekere magsposisie wat gegee word aan die ou wat goeie *speech writing* doen, die ou wat basies vir die CEO kan skryf … ouens met skryfvaardighede het dikwels meer informele mag as die hoof van die afdeling …"].

One respondent highlighted the legacy of journalism in the country, where especially black communicators started their careers in journalism, focussing their efforts on the Struggle. From there they would typically progress to deputy director or directorate level in a state department, and then move into the middle- or senior-management level in the private sector. The respondent then stated that "… the result is that they started their career with political aspirations and do not necessarily understand business or have corporate communication skills".

The respondents agreed that journalists who enter the profession need further education and information to enlighten them on the relationship paradigm followed in communication, as well as on the managerial and strategist roles.

While respondents focused on encroachment from a background of journalism, theory suggests that encroachment can take place from the marketing, general management, office management, human resources and even finance functions, as well (Lauzen, 1991:245; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155).

5.2.2.1.8. Race

Respondents agreed that the practitioner's race is not a determinant of their contribution to organisational performance as "… race doesn't come into it". Rather, the knowledge of applicable corporate communication theory and the ability to apply it in a real work situations

are important, as well as that "… the person is open-minded – that is what matters…". Literature could not confirm or negate this opinion, as there is little information available on the racial breakdown and the possibly differing perspectives of practitioners from different racial backgrounds within South Africa.

As discussed in section 3.4.1.2., the issue of race within the South African environment directly leads one to also consider affirmative action as an aspect relating to race. Affirmative action was described by the respondents to have "… impacted broadly …" and negatively on corporate communication: "Affirmative action helped level the ground … It did not necessarily equip people". The following specific negative consequences of affirmative action were mentioned, which are more encompassing than those mentioned in literature (see section 3.4.1.2.):

- First, depending on the race of the practitioner, s/he would be appointed or not appointed – or selected or not selected as service providers – in a specific position, regardless of skill. One respondent specifically mentioned that affirmative action played a negative a role in her ability to advance her career, as many companies have not yet reached their BEE targets and "… now try to accomplish it through appointments in the communication department ...". However, another respondent, from a previously disadvantaged group, argued that affirmative action offered her the opportunity to get a "… good job and get into the profession ...".
- Second, respondents argued that affirmative action has an impact on who their stakeholders are and on the demographic characteristics of their stakeholders. For instance, an organisation may need to target school-leaving black students with mathematics or science as a stakeholder group if they were to source some of these candidates for positions in their organisations. Furthermore, as an example and according to demographics, government departments as a focus group have changed dramatically from what they were during the Apartheid Era to their current status.
- Third and last, the application of affirmative action by an organisation influences the attitude of stakeholders towards the organisation.

In conclusion it was argued that many people still live "… with huge historical chips of disadvantage on their shoulders" and that the practitioner needs to "… manage the fears of the whites versus the expectation of the blacks" within the organisation.

5.2.2.1.9. Multilingualism

Only one respondent specifically mentioned multilinguism as an aspect that could assist practitioners in conversing witth stakeholders to build relationships.
The respondent did, however, state that the practitioner should be fluent in more than two languages (be multilingual) to assist in managing diversity. The respondent argued that the practitioner should speak "… as many [languages] as that person can speak…", as this "… gives ability to function" within the South African environment.

However, multilingualism alone, was not equated to a practitioner who contributes to organisational performance, as "… there is more to human beings than language … language restricts you to text or presentation". Bilinguilism or multilingualism was, however, not a variable mentioned in literature.

5.2.2.1.10. Ethical practice

Although respondents did not mention the word *ethics* specifically, they did point to aspects such as *integrity*, *trust* and *honesty* as being important for the practitioner in building their own credibility and thus being able to be trusted in the organisation and to contribute to organisational performance. As one said: "Practitioners need to have high integrity before business will even trust you with information".

It was argued that practitioners work with sensitive and confidential information that could "… affect share price; it could literally ruin people's lives if not handled properly", and unethical behaviour could "… completely ruin everybody's faith in the practice and discipline". Ethical practice thus boils down to "… how you handle what you know …".

For these reasons respondents argued that ethics should be part of all basic corporate communications curricula.

It could be suggested that respondents viewed ethical practice as a personal character trait of the practitioner, rather than the adherence to a code of practice, as suggested by professional bodies, or a charter, as has been signed in South Africa to enhance ethical practice (see sections 1.3.2.4., 3.6.3. and 3.8.5.6.).

5.2.2.1.11. Networking skills

All four respondents argued that networking skills are important to the practitioner. One respondent indicated that "… it depends on the mandate of the function … It is related to the context" [In Afrikaans: "Dit hang af van die mandaat van die funksie … Dis konteks gebonde"]. For instance, in a government environment, networking could be very important, but in a consumer organisation it would be less important. The practitioner thus needs to be emotionally mature to be able to network and to "… not make a fool of yourself".

Over and above the suggestion by literature that networking is important to the practitioner (Broadbridge, 2004:559; Yaari & Krass, 2003:27A), respondents elaborated on and provided the following nuances to the description of this skill. Respondents argued that networking skills are important as:

- Networking can create trust between the practitioner and stakeholders, "… especially when interacting with the community, government and other stakeholders … as well as inside the company ...". One respondent added that even internally it is important to gain trust through networking: "Managers must be able to call me … trust me", otherwise "I will sit here and just shovel e-mails and bulletins, but it's not going to make an impact …". However, another respondent argued that building a relationship with stakeholders differed from networking in that building relationships with stakeholders were seen as crucial to contributing to organisational perfomance, and as part of the practitioners' duties. Networking, however, was seen as something that the practitioner could do, but it was not necessarily needed to contribute to organisational performance.
- Another response was that "… companies are hiring on networks you bring to the party …". What employers are looking for, is the "… expertise you've got access to…"; "knowledge of best practice and lessons from other companies".
- Networking also "… enables you to understand people".

One respondent argued that the focus on networking skills creates the impression that the practitioner should also be an extrovert with good interpersonal skills, while in fact the focus of the practitioner should be to facilitate the building of relationships on behalf of the organisation.

Networking was not linked to the time the person has spent in public relations since "… a lot of people come to the end of their careers and their network is still quite small …".

5.2.2.2. Organisational-level variables

5.2.2.2.1. Organisational politics

All the respondents agreed that organisational politics exist and pose a challenge to the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance: "Corporate politics is probably the biggest downfall of any communication practitioner …" and "… can quite literally take you out on the knees …". Respondents elaborated on organisational politics as described in literature. Organisational politics was seen to play a role in missed opportunities for communication, *stumped* internal communication, and clouded the practitioner's intent towards senior management.

The respondents agreed, in accordance with Le Roux (2004:47), that practitioners need to be aware of organisational politics, but advised that they do not get involved in it. "One needs to be aware of them [people who play organisational politics] but needs to rise above them". Organisational politics "…should not be how you practice … however, it is important to know who gets along with whom ... and who does not see eye to eye with whom".

Two respondents also argued that organisational politics and culture are closely related, as the type of politics in the organisation is part of the organisational culture. For instance, to either be friends with the CEO or to be strong opposition is an aspect of the organisational culture, but it leads to politics: "Culture and politics are the same … culture is the way we do things around here … and … politics is a part of how we do things" [In Afrikaans: "Kultuur en politiek is dieselfde ding …culture is the way we do things around here ... and… politics is 'n vorm van hoe ons dinge doen (sic)"].

5.2.2.2.2. Organisational size

Organisational size was not seen as having a huge influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance as "… a good practitioner would be able to cope in either [big or small organisations] …".

The argument was that a bigger organisation could offer more career opportunities to the practitioner, but not necessarily more exposure, as practitioners are "… placed in a box … ", especially at junior level. Therefore, the respondent argued, it will take a long time for practitioners in a bigger organisation to get all the necessary experience of all the facets of the job.

The respondents stated that organisational size is secondary to organisational culture, similar to what Grunig *et al.* (2002:505) had found in their research on excellence. It was argued that if the organisational culture were to nurture communication, even if the organisation were to be big, then you "…don't need many practitioners to promote communication". However, "… if the organisation is small but the culture is not right, you can have one hundred people in it and still not have good communication".

5.2.2.2.3. Organisational structure and culture

One respondent argued that organisational structure could keep one from acting strategically, for instance when the department is placed low on the hierarchy or the reporting line is too long. However, all the respondents argued that culture, more than organisational size, structure, and politics, has the biggest influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. This correlates with the findings of the Excellence Study (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:505).

The respondents then further described aspects of organisational culture not specifically mentioned in literature (see section 3.5.2.2.). Culture was argued to have a big impact on the practitioner, as the culture of the organisation touches upon the world view of the company – specifically the senior leadership – and their view of communication: "… if it is that type of culture it is difficult to introduce two-way [communication]".

Culture also influences aspects such as males being more resistant to females' ideas or when the manager is not knowledgeable about communication. Culture can, however, also motivate management to let the practitioner take the lead and strategically manage the communication function.

5.2.2.2.4. The role of management

Respondents agreed with the suggestion of O'Neil (2003a:165) that management's perceptions of the value of public relations will severely impact on the function. All the respondents briefly mentioned that management has a large influence on how communication can be practiced: "If the leader in it [the organisation] … has a certain [technical] view of communication it makes it extremely difficult". It was also mentioned that a strategically orientated manager could intuitively adapt more to the relational corporate communication perspective and support the practitioner in contributing more to organisational performance.

Since management could have an influence on the contribution of the practitioner to organisational performance, one respondent felt strongly that management should take corporate communication refresher courses, and that communication targets should be built into the critical performance indicators of the manager to whom the practitioner reports for performance appraisals.

Two specific situations with regard to management were mentioned as challenges. These follow below:

- The situation where a male manager was "… resistant to women …" and created a very difficult work environment for a female practitioner, although in their research, Grunig *et al.* (2001:240) concluded that practitioners equally preferred to work for a male or female manager.
- The situation where a respondent's direct manager was less qualified than her subordinate. The manager felt inferior and reacted by micro-managing the practitioner (see section 3.5.3.5.).

5.2.2.2.5. The role of a mentor or role model

None of the respondents reported having a (communication) mentor within their business environments, although all feel that "… it would have helped a lot because then I would have had a sounding board." Some of the respondents tried to overcome the situation by closely watching their role models, and others used their postgraduate studies and their former supervisors as mentors. Respondents thus indicated an intuitive feel for the benefits of mentoring as suggested by Pompper and Adams (2006:312, 314).

One respondent argued that mentoring is part of some traditional South African cultures, with the focus on skills transfer. However this type of mentoring usually occurs outside the workplace. This respondent argued that it is " … a very healthy African principle that can be used more often". [In Afrikaans: Dit is "… 'n baie, baie gesonde Afrika *principle* wat baie meer gebruik kan word"].

In agreement with Pompper and Adams (2006:311) that a mentorship relationship has requirements, one of the respondents mentioned that a mentors need to have a solid education for people to have faith in them, while another respondent argued that practitioners should make themselves available to mentor others.

5.2.2.3. Industry-level variables

All the respondents indicated that different industries would present the practitioner with different challenges (ref. Le Roux, 2004:46; Moss *et al.,* 2000:297). However, these issues could also be seen as the "… same issues in different" industries, and that the overall challenges at country-level (challenges of working in South Africa) would remain the same across industries. One respondent stated that, "There are certain things that are universal and then there are other things that are very different" [In Afrikaans then: "Daar is sekere goed wat universeel is en dan is daar sekere goed wat baie verskillend is"].

In some industries it was mentioned that the role of industry regulations is "… a good excuse for your *not-such-good practitioner* to stay a *not-so-good practitioner* … [and be] a challenge for your good practitioner ...". It was argued that the good practitioner would view industry regulations as challenges and try to influence the regulations, lobby and advise top management within the industry environment. Practitioners can, however, only do this when they know and understand the industry environment, as suggested in section 3.6. In these interviews, however, only one respondent viewed industry variables as an important influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

5.2.2.4. Country-level variables

Similar to the suggestions in literature (see section 3.5.), all the respondents indicated that a practitioner working in South Africa would need to have specific skills. These include the following:

- Being able to adapt to change (transformation);
- being knowledgeable about issues such as governmental legislation, protocol, human rights and other local issues;
- being able to work with different cultures and understand cultural diversity and apply diversity management while being "… racially blind …" and seeing all stakeholders as equal, and acknowledging the different dynamics between cultures and people: "… recognise the different dynamics of racial and ethnic groups";
- understanding the diverse audiences and the specific use of communication channels in this particular environment; and
- the practitioner should be able to applying first-world communication theory to a third-world country context and be able to "… bring back forgotten third-world communication types, such as storytelling …". This implies that South Africa is a unique environment, which is very different from that of the USA and other parts of

the world: “The difference between developing and developed countries …” [In Afrikaans: “Die verskil tussen ontwikkelende en ontwikkelde lande …”].

- The respondent was of the opinion that Europe tended to think more technically and mentioned that the USA had a very different environment and requirements for the practitioner, than in South Africa.

The respondents saw the South African environment as challenging, but as something that should be embraced by the practitioner wanting to contribute to organisational performance.

5.2.2.5. Professional-level variables

5.2.2.5.1. Professional body membership

All the respondents mentioned that they did belong to either/or PRISA or/and the IABC at some point in time. They, however found the offerings of these professional bodies to be lacking as:

- they could gain more knowledge and input from business organisations within the industry, such as the Industrial Council of Mining Workers (ICMW), and
- they could gain access to international information through publications such as those produced by Melcrum Publishing, which provides information on the most current business-related research.

There was, however a strong feeling that professional membership is a waste of time: “They are wasting my time” [In Afrikaans: “Hulle mors my tyd …”]. The respondent stated specifically “… [that] PRISA lost an opportunity … I’ve looked at the leadership and I don’t think it’s what it should be ...”.

This negative view towards the professional bodies could explain the trend of limited membership numbers (ref. O’Connor & Falconi, 2003:2). One respondent, however, argued that membership to the IABC gave her international contacts and information.

The respondents’ membership fees were paid by their employer, which indicates that fee structures may not be such a big problem to respondents and that the concern is rather about the value received from membership of such an organisation.

5.2.2.5.2. Expectations of professional bodies

The respondents' had clear expectations of professional bodies, which included the following. These are over and above those mentioned in literature (see section 3.8.):

- Providing channels through which one could plough back into the profession, a "… platform upon which we can share case studies". This could add to the body of knowledge on South African case studies, as many European and American case studies were available, but not South African case studies: "… nobody tells us our story…".
- Professional bodies should share knowledge and "… help communicators understand what is best practice … local and internationally". Examples are circulating information from academic journals after filtering the information, and doing general environmental scanning such as providing information on the influence of the *King II Report* on communication.
- Enlightening the practitioners on how the discipline can add value to the organisation.
- The role of the professional body should be to help share ideas, network and share names of potential service providers; to provide a forum where people can network and bounce ideas off one another to gain insight: "… these are the associations for communication practitioners, and where they come together to share information with each other".
- One respondent wanted the professional bodies to act "... almost like a safety net …" as they could or should offer short courses and up-skilling opportunities by providing " … qualified education opportunities that are relevant …" [In Afrikaans: " … gekwalifiseerde opleidingsgeleenthede wat relevant is …"]. Professional bodies, however, currently focus on technical skills in their training, which does not correlate with the need within business: "Look at the stupid training which they do and look at the large weight assigned to technical skills and then it is not strange to me that people do not feel like doing it" [In Afrikaans: "Kyk na die *stupid* training wat hulle doen en jy kyk na hoe 'n geweldige gewig al die tegniese vaardighede nog steeds tel en dan is dit nie vir my snaaks dat mense nie lus het om dit te gaan doen nie."].
- They should also show that they are "… ahead of the game ..." to play a leadership role and promote the profession.

However, the respondents stated clearly that professional bodies would not need to educate the organisation on the practitioner's role. The practitioners should create their own recognition within their work environment. One respondent argued that should outside

assistance be called in to educate the organisation about the practitioner's role, the practitioner's recognition and reputation would be tarnished as it would seem that the practitioner is not credible.

Respondents also argued that it would be difficult for a practitioner to choose which professional body will answer to their needs as, "… how do you know which one is the best one, which one is the one you should spend the company's money on …?".

5.2.2.5.3. Accreditation and professionalisation

Although the respondents were positive about the principle of accreditation, they were sceptical as to what accreditation could achieve as it alone would not make a difference between a good and great practitioner, "… but might make a difference between a poor and a good practitioner". If accreditation of practitioners were to succeed, the respondents argued that it could lead to acknowledgement and credibility in the business environment. It could also give business the comfort of knowing that they were gaining employees who are proficient in basic corporate communication skills.

However, the respondents felt strongly that " … accreditation for the sake of accreditation will not make a difference …" as accreditation standards for the communication industry are not known in business. This suggestion is in agreement with the views of Molleda and Athaydes (2003:274) who suggest that, in the case of Brazil, licensing through accreditation will not automatically lead to recognition of the function.

In the hope that professional status would add to the recognition of the function (ref. APRA, 2004), Tobin (2004:56-64) argues that Royal Chartered Status could assist the practitioner. Chartered Status would endorse professionalism of the industry and practitioners as its function is to standardise skills and knowledge (Tobin, 2004:62).

One respondent, however, did mention that owing to the fact that communication was " … by nature a hybrid", it is too vaguely defined to enable accreditation of the profession. Furthermore she stated that, "As long as it stands with its feet across disciplines, I don't know how it can really be professionalised" [In Afrikaans: "… solank as dit … wydsbeen oor dissiplines is dink ek nie dit kan regtig geprofessionaliseer word nie."]. In addition, the respondent argued that professions that were accredited had specific liabilities and set quality requirements, which communication as a profession does not have.

More than suggested in theory (see section 3.8.5.4.), respondents also argued that for accreditation to materialise there would have to be push-and-pull factors. It was stated that the push factors – practitioners asking for accreditation because they are *fed up* with *fly-by-night* practitioners – are high. However, similar to L'Etang (2004:221), who suggested that only a small group of practitioners was concerned with professional status, the respondents agreed that not all practitioners are concerned with accreditation. They furthermore argued that the pull factors – business asking for accreditation – are not there and that this factor will limit any efforts to accreditation.

5.2.2.5.4. Vague definition of corporate communication

In accordance with literature (see section 3.8.2.), all the respondents agreed that there is "… no common understanding within the practitioner's world …" of the definition of corporate communication to be used in the work environment. Therefore it is difficult to motivate how practitioners can add to organisational performance and argue for recognition within the organisation. Furthermore, practitioners themselves are not clear on what corporate communication entails and therefore it makes it "… difficult for other people to take us seriously".

The respondents then agreed that the challenge for practitioners who wanted to add to organisational performance is "… to clearly state their business case for communications …" and to "… motivate why they need to be taken seriously".

Corporate communication is seen as a developing discipline, which still needs to be clearly defined within the business world.

5.2.2.6. Describing the *good* practitioner

Upon answering the question, "What makes a *good* practitioner (where a good practitioner contributes to organisational performance)?", it was clear that there were no clear or single answers. The respondents mentioned various aspects, in no particular order of importance. These follow below:

- Understanding and being able to adapt to the challenges of the South African business environment as suggested by the country-level variables discussed in section 3.7. (ref. Grunig, 2001:19; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:2). Two respondents argued that the practitioner must be able to adapt and use challenges in the environment to show their impact on the organisation. For instance: "In South Africa

we are dealing with a liberated community … the expectations are very different … communities are very rigorous and know what is due to them". Internal stakeholders were also seen to be more aware of issues such as human rights and empowerment (among others) and asked questions that were previously not asked. The respondents agreed that, "This whole transformation conversation in the country requires communication to be more of a change agent than pushing data and information".

- Being able to continue contributing to the organisation despite the definition the function not being clear in the business environment, the respondents' view was that "… we are at a juncture … [corporate communication] is not yet well defined". However, it was argued that the practitioner should still use opportunities to make the function clear within the business environment, as was found and suggested by Van Ruler (2004a:123).
- Aspects pertaining to the practitioner's *personality*:
    - Practitioners should be politically correct and sensitive towards others (ref. Bhimani, 1995:29; Black, 1995:179; Rogers, 1980:233; Yeomans, 2007:213). It is interesting to note that the practitioners who specifically referred to political correctness and sensitivity were the practitioners of colour. This is not to imply that white practitioners do not view this as important, but to state that people of colour are more attuned to this aspect, possibly due to their particular cultural and sociological background.
    - Practitioners should be people orientated or have an open personality (be interested in people; ref. Awad, 1985:25; Black, 1995:179), which implies that the practitioner must be "… somebody who can interact well, get on well with other people". The practitioner must therefore have an outwards orientation, understand their impact on another people, and have tolerance for another's point of view. It was stated that, "A loner in approach and personality … will not be able to get the desired results".
    - Practitioners should be able to "… clearly explain their ideas …" and be able to lead people as this will allow them to make inroads into the organisation. This, however, can take a long time and practitioners should be patient and take it "… one chunk at a time …". This aspect, as well as the aspect following below, were not specifically mentioned in literature dealing with the practitioner's personality.
    - Practitioners should be able to lead without wanting to be in the spotlight. The practitioner should be comfortable "… not to be the glory boy ... let someone else be in the spotlight …".

- Aspects pertaining to the practitioner's *skills and knowledge*:
    - Practitioners must know and understand the value of a relationship with stakeholders and be able to focus on the technical, managerial and strategic aspects of their jobs. Therefore practitioners need understanding of and knowledge about the roles to be played in the South African environment (see section 2.2.4.2.).
    - Practitioners "… need a sense of how to make it happen …". This implied that practitioners need to be able to think on their feet and apply experience and knowledge to "… be a doer as well as a thinker". Practitioners should be able to craft solutions and implement them. These characteristics could be argued to be a combination of the resourcefulness, a capacity for hard work, and problem-solving abilities that practitioners should have according to literature (Bhimani, 1995:29; Black, 1995:179; Bowman & Ellis, 1977:275; Budd, 1992:37).
    - One respondent specifically referred to understanding the systems-thinking paradigm with regard to understanding the business environment (ref. Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Puth, 1994:40-52; Steyn, 2000a:4). The respondent referred to such a practitioner as someone "… who can think strategically, within systems thinking; who can understand how the greater environment influences the business environment and relate to it". Further, a practitioner should have "… a good understanding of business, a very good understanding of how stakeholders can impact on the business and the bottom line, and a good understanding of which aspects are related to which aspects and what can impact the business in the end" [In Afrikaans: "… wat kan strategies dink, maar systems thinking … Moet kan verstaan hoe die groter omgewing die besigheidomgewing beïnvloed en daarnatoe relate." Further, "… 'n baie goeie verstaan van besigheid, 'n baie goeie verstaan van hoe stakeholders kan impakteer op besigheid en op die bottom line en 'n goeie begrip van wat alles met mekaar verband hou en op die ou end kan impakteer op besigheid."].

It was, however, agreed by all the respondents that practitioners should have a basic set of skills, and that the *good* practitioner should have something extra to offer.

Respondents argued, for instance, that there should be a basic set of skills, as argued in section 3.4.2.1., which include technical writing skills, being able to do measurement, being able to contribute to teamwork and having management leadership skills. Practitioners also

need an understanding of what communication entails in the environment in which they are working. Also, knowledge of the stakeholder theory and two-way symmetrical communication and other theories are important. Such a basis of skills and knowledge would also make it easier for organisations to hire practitioners as it would provide some kind of general expectation of the basic skills and knowledge of practitioners.

One respondent did, however, mention that when interacting with other practitioners, she was one of the only ones who could remember what she was taught at university and that many people do not have such a knowledge base. Even people with a great amount of knowledge (university degrees) are not successful as communication practitioners. As the respondent stated: "I would like to believe that a sound knowledge base will take one forward … at the same time there are people who finish their studies with a huge knowledge base and who just do not make it" [In Afrikaans: "Ek wil graag glo dat a sound knowledge base mens êrens heen vat, maar terselfdertyd is daar mense wat afstudeer met hierdie magdom van kennis en dit net nie maak nie."].

The *extra* that a *good practitioner* then offers is that s/he understands and can strategically contribute to the value of communication, as well as understands business and is able to "… hold a conversation on a business matter ...". As one respondent stated: "[a good practitioner] … is able to talk business sense". Being a good practitioner thus constitutes "… never think[ing that] corporate communication management is only common sense". These characteristics are similar to those expected from the strategist public relations practitioner (see section 2.2.4.2.1.; Everett, 2006:101-102; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18).

In reply, then, the respondents all agreed that a *no-so-good practitioner* is seen as a risk to the organisation as s/he does not have strategic knowledge (is not able to "… see the bigger picture…"); does not understand the value of communication to the organisation; and does not have the personality traits as set out above.

One respondent even identified a few, typical characteristics that *not-so-good practitioners* have and that could harm the profession:

- The *bullshitter* (sic) would be a person who works solely on intuition and then interprets a situation and reacts to it. Usually these practitioners talk very eloquently and use language to impress people, but are not educated and do not understand the role of public relations. They "… speak well, are smooth, but know nothing …" [In Afrikaans: Hulle "... praat goed, hulle is *smooth*, [maar] hulle weet niks ..."]. These

practitioners usually do not last very long in the organisation before they are identified and replaced. They " … fly for a while and then get caught out" [In Afrikaans: Hulle sal "…'n rukkie lank *fly* en [word] dan uitgevang…"].

- The *nerd* (sic) is seen as a person who has theoretical knowledge, but is not able to apply the theory to the practice and is not streetwise.
- The *connected practitioner* (sic) is described as a practitioner who has obtained a position due owing to his/her connections. These practitioners are defined as being without substance and knowledge, but can be very powerful owing to their connections.
- The *dolls* ["poppies"] (sic) are categorised as usually owning, "… BMWs, having a new hairstyle every week, wearing a low neckline and high heels, and only boutique clothes …" [In Afrikaans: Hulle besit "BMW's, elke week 'n nuwe haarstyl, lae hals en hoë hakke en net boutique klere."]. They are usually not well informed about the contribution that the profession can make to the organisation.

It is interesting to note that the descriptions of a *not-so-good practitioner*, are basically the opposite to what a *good practitioner* should be. The respondents did, however, seem to be able to more easily describe a *good practitioner*, rather than one who was *not so good*, implying that they are clear on what the *ideal* or *good* practitioner should be doing.

5.2.3. Synopsis: Practitioner Respondent Interviews

The requirements for a practitioner who contributes to organisational performance, as suggested by the respondents, are extensive. One could question the possibility of finding one individual with all these skills and knowledge, or these requirements may point to the uniqueness of the corporate communication practitioner.

Most of the variables mentioned by the respondents are similar to those found in literature, and include:

- *The worldviews of a practitioner*: The practitioner needs to not only understand the worldviews of different stakeholders, but to be able to practise corporate communication from a relational and strategic paradigm.
- *Emotional maturity*: The importance of emotional maturity for the practitioner in conducting their work was highlighted.
- *The education, knowledge and skills of the practitioner*:
    - The practitioner must have business knowledge.

  - The practitioner must have the ability to act as a facilitator, explain his/her ideas, and act as a leader.
  - The importance of not only having some education and experience, but having acquired it within the relational and strategic framework, which will then limit the encroachment of those educated in journalism.
  - The need for more appropriate training for practitioners active in the field.
  - The acknowledgement of networking benefits for the practitioner.
  - Understanding that, to network, a practitioner does not need to be an extrovert.
  - The need for corporate communication educators to have business experience in corporate communication.
- *The career goal**s** of the practitioner**:*** Career goals are seen to reflect the practitioner's view of the communication function. Therefore some practitioners will choose to enact the technical role, while others will want to enact the strategist role. This is argued to be similar for other professions.
- *The characteristics of the practitioners:*
  - Being a specific gender or having a feminine orientation is not perceived as a precursor to being a good practitioner. However, respondents did acknowledge that different people do bring different nuances to the function.
  - Age does not determine a practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.
  - The practitioner who has the personality traits as a *go-getter* and a problem-solver will aid her/him in contributing to organisational performance.
  - The practitioner must have the ability to be open-minded and sensitive to others.
- *Organisational characteristics:*
  - Practitioners should be aware of, but not participate in organisational politics.
  - An organisation's size and structure are secondary to organisational culture as an influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.
  - Encroachment from the field of journalism is seen to be rife in the corporate communication profession.
  - Acknowledgement that mentoring relationships demand specific requirements from the mentor as well as the protégé.
- *Industry and country-level variables:*
  - Good practitioners are aware of and manage industry variables.
  - In South Africa practitioners are expected to:

  - adapt to change;
  - be knowledgeable about legislation, protocol, and the like;
  - be able to work with diverse stakeholders and understand the specific communication channels to be used for each; and
  - be able to apply first-world knowledge to a third-world context.
- *The vague definition of the function*: The vague definition of the function should not hold a practitioner back from contributing to organisational performance.
- *Accreditation*: Practitioners are not overly concerned about accreditation.

In many cases, respondents elaborated on the viewpoints mentioned in literature as discussed in the sections above. These included:

- *Education:* Practitioners should not only strive to have appropriate public relations education, but need to exhibit an attitude of life-long learning.
- *Gender:*
  - Respondents had conflicting views on whether females bring a relationship orientation to the function or are without empathy.
  - Respondents had conflicting views on whether the large number of female practitioners had an influence on salary discrepancies and stereotyping in the profession.
- *Emotional maturity:* Respondents believed that emotional maturity, more than merely personality, experience or education, would give the practitioner the skills to handle difficult situations; deal with diverse stakeholder views; and the ability to gain integrity within management circles.
- *Mentorship:*
  - Respondents argued that practitioners should not only want to be mentored, but have a responsibility to offer themselves as mentors.
  - Respondents indicated that mentors should be limited to only those practitioners who have appropriate corporate communication education and experience within the relational and strategist paradigms.
  - Mentorship was seen as part of some South African cultures and as such, should be applied to the organisational environment.
- *Management characteristics:*
  - One respondent argued that since management's view of the public relations function influences the contribution that the function can make to organisational performance, management should attend courses to become abreast of the value of public relations.

    - In some instances respondents reported that male managers are resistant to female employees and their contribution to organisational performance.
- *Country-level variables*:
    - Respondents argued that affirmative action and BEE have far-reaching consequences for the practice, which are more than simply the allocation of positions to the previously disadvantaged.
- *Professional membership and accreditation:*
    - Respondents showed a lack of interest in professional membership, and argued that it did not provide them with valuable information and support.
    - Respondents maintain that accreditation would only become a reality once pull factors – a need from business – are established.
    - Respondents contend that acting ethically should not be dependent on an ethical code or charter, but should be inherent to the practitioner.
    - Respondents expect the professional body(ies) to:
        - be a vehicle through which one can could plough back into the profession;
        - share knowledge;
        - show how public relations can add value to the organisation;
        - act as a safety net in terms of upskilling practitioners and assisting them with knowledge and the sharing of experiences; and
        - show that they are abreast of the latest developments and aware of those that affect the public relations profession.

The aspects identified in the interviews that were found not found in literature on the topic are as follows:

- The respondents suggested that speaking more than one or two languages (*multilingualism*) could assist the practitioner in dealing with diverse stakeholders. However, this aspect was not seen as a prerequisite to contribute to organisational performance.
- Respondents reason that *practitioner behaviour and personality should enforce each other.*
- Respondents maintained that *practitioners expect too much from their education (studies)* in terms of career development. It was explained that practitioners expect education alone to enable them to quickly advance in their career.
- Respondents claimed that many *good public relations scholars do not move into the profession*, and therefore their knowledge and skills are lost to the practice.

- Respondents reasoned that, in some instances, *who you know (connectedness)* can give power to a practitioner in a situation in the organisation and thereby assist the practitioner in contributing more to organisational performance.
- The variable of management or a specific manager being less qualified than the practitioner could limit the practitioner's freedom to suggest taking certain actions and suggest changes to be made. Thus *having a higher educational qualification than their direct manager*, posed a challenge.
- Respondents tended to *focus more on variables at the individual-level,* than any of the other levels.
- Last, it is also important to note the emphasis that respondents placed on the *responsibility of the practitioner to manage the variables influencing* them in contributing to organisational performance. It was repeatedly stated that the practitioner should not act as a victim of influences, but take charge of the situation within which they find themselves.

The aspects of multilingualism, connectedness, and having a higher educational qualification that their direct manager, were included in the questionnaire (see table 4.5).

5.3. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH THE CHAIRPERSONS OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

One interview with each of the chairpersons of the two professional corporate communication bodies in South Africa, PRISA and IABC, were conducted to gain their views on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, as well as the role of the professional within this setting.

The respondents referred to *good practitioners* as those who contribute to organisational performance, and *not-so-good practitioners* as those who do not contribute to organisational performance.

Since the viewpoints of the two professional bodies were so different and emphasis was placed on different issues, each will be discussed separately.

5.3.1. Background on the Professional Bodies

5.3.1.1. IABC

According to the respondent, the IABC has 15 000 members world wide, approximately 140–150 members in South Africa, and the numbers are still growing.

The IABC board members and chairperson in South Africa work part time for the organisation "… for the love of the matter …".
This respondent paid much attention to variables at the individual-level, specifically to the role of education on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. She clearly defined the differences between the various roles that a practitioner performs and what is needed at each level within a strategic view of corporate communication.

5.3.1.2. PRISA

According to the respondent, PRISA has approximately 1 200 members and 1 500 student members. The PRISA chairperson is a full-time employee of PRISA, a manager with the specific assignment to deliver talks on PRISA and on the career development of the practitioner. PRISA employs consultants to advise them on corporate communication strategy.

The respondent paid special attention to variables at the individual and professional-level which influence the practitioner, with the main focus on career planning and education.

5.3.2. The Role of the Professional Body

5.3.2.1. IABC

According to this respondent the IABC as a professional body should offer members the following:

- First, the professional body must give practitioners *networking opportunities* to enable them to transfer knowledge. According to the respondent, the IABC provides this service through world-wide Internet discussions and local "buzz meetings".
- Second, the professional body should *enhance the image* of the function in business. The respondent argued that this will remain a long-term goal which is difficult to

achieve. The respondent went so far as to explain that the professional body has a role to play in educating directors of companies on the importance and role of communication. However, the respondent felt that the starting point to enhance the image of the profession is through conferences and the media.

- Third, the professional body needs to assist practitioners in obtaining *accreditation*. The respondent, however, mentioned that achieving accreditation has not yet had much success in South Africa. The IABC, however, offers Accredited Business Communicator (ABC)[18] accreditation that is internationally recognised. The focus, however, is first to enhance the image of the profession before pushing for accreditation specifically in South Africa.
- Fourth, the professional body should create and enhance contact with universities and students to *obtain the involvement of persons at entry level in the* professional bodies.

The views mentioned above only coincided somewhat with literature in that the professional body should implement and manage accreditation, and enhance the function by, among others aspects, creating a single voice for the profession. Literature, however, did not necessarily imply that the professional body should focus on educating management as suggested by the professional bodies (ref. Euprera, 2008; Inter-comm, 2005; see section 3.8.5.). In addition, the interview respondents indicated that they would prefer to build their own recognition in the organisation (see section 5.2.2.5.2.).

The respondent confirmed that the IABC does not actively work with other professional bodies within the limited South African market. Furthermore, the IABC and PRISA do not collaborate as their focus on education differs. The respondent also added that it was "… typically South African to keep things to yourself and to not work together … because they are scared that their members would be poached" [In Afrikaans: Dit is "… tipies Suid-Afrikaans om dinge vir jouself te hou en nie saam te werk nie … want hulle is ook bang hul lede word gesteel"].

[18] Practitioners can earn the Accredited Business Communicator (ABC) accreditation by meeting set requirements with regards to their knowledge of strategic communication planning, implementation, measurement and ethics. This is a peer-reviewed examination process (IABC, 2010).

The IABC has, however, cooperated with Melcrum Publishing by completing many of their questionnaires in an attempt to share knowledge.

The chairperson of the IABC mentioned that they do not have many South African members as yet, but are constantly trying to increase membership. Before trying to recruit members, they specifically focus on determining what practitioners need from professional bodies such as the IABC.

The respondent argued that membership fees are currently their main concern and the reason why people do not become members is because the fees are so high. She argued that. owing to the fact that payment is made in dollars, and due to the weak ZAR/USA$ exchange rate, membership fees can become expensive. She reported the current IABC membership fees are approximately R1 400.00 per year and commented that, “Many people stare themselves blind against the price …” [In Afrikaans: “Baie ouens kyk vas teen prys …”]. Also, PRISA’s fees are much cheaper than those of the IABC. The concern about membership fees was not mentioned in literature and was in contrast to the view of the interview respondents who indicated that value added by a professional body is of greater concern than the fee structure (see section 5.2.2.5.1.).

5.3.2.2. PRISA

According to the respondent, PRISA wishes to establish itself as a “… leader in corporate communication and communication management in South Africa …” by focussing on education (courses) for individual or profession skills and by acting as the South African contact for international corporate communication bodies.

Furthermore, the respondent indicated that PRISA should fulfil the following roles:

- PRISA should push members to understand and apply the *ethics and professionalism* of public relations, which are then endorsed through courses and accreditation.
- It should provide a *career path* for prospective corporate communication practitioners from the end of their school careers onwards, as well as for those with experience by offering CPD opportunities ensure their progression.

  PRISA itself does not offer training but have three endorsed training partners and a few interested partners that are offering a combination of their courses. The diploma or degree is then endorsed with the PRISA logo, as long as the student is a PRISA member. Once the student has completed the training / education, they would receive

a 50% discount on their first year of membership. According to the respondent, the endorsement also assists students in getting internships and jobs.

- To assist practitioners in gaining *accreditation*. PRISA endorses APR[19] accreditation. Although accreditation is not mandatory in South Africa, PRISA is aware that accreditation is mandatory in the UK.
- PRISA should encourage senior practitioners to *give back* to the profession by allowing them to obtain CPD points by mentoring, doing advocacy for the profession, serving on university advisory councils or speaking at conferences. Academics are also rewarded for summating and publishing academic work and translating that into practical knowledge for practitioners. However, the respondent found that "… academic people find that difficult ...".
- It should *educate business executives* on what communication entails, but not to advocate the profession. However, they acknowledge that "… [we are] not very effective right now". The respondent reported that PRISA is working towards having communication added to business degrees as a separate module and that they speak at conferences and use their monthly publication, *Communika*, to help with the positioning of the function. The respondent did, however, mention that some managers understand the importance of communication, but "… others only understand when there is drama [conflict or a crisis] …".

PRISA's focus on education and skills enhancement, enforcing accreditation and ethics, and acting as a single voice for the discipline is in agreement with what is suggested in literature. However, providing career paths for practitioners, encouraging practitioners to give back to the profession and educating business executives were not mentioned in literature (ref. Euprera, 2008; Inter-comm, 2005; see section 3.8.5.). Furthermore, respondents agued that this type of training focuses too much on technical skills to be of value in the organisation (see section 5.2.2.5.2.).

[19] *APR stands for Accredited Public Relations Practitioner. It is an accreditation awarded by PRISA based on the practitioner's academic qualifications and experience. APR indicates that the practitioner is widely experienced, considered an expert, and understands and can contribute to the organisation's strategy, goals and bottom line (PRISA, 2009b).*

The respondent reported that PRISA has worked with other professional bodies, which they divided into three groups:

- Group 1 consists of public relations and communication management organisations such as the South African Institute of Fundraising (SAIF), the Institute of Investor Relations, and the local IABC Chapter. However, the meetings are mostly ad hoc.
- Group 2 includes the marketing, advertising and communication organisations such as broadcasters and advertisers. There is amonthly meeting that PRISA attends.
- Group 3 includes specialist organisations such as SACOMM or human-resources organisations.

The respondent mentioned that the organisation offers corporate membership, academic membership and group memberships to meet the needs of the practitioners and keeps fees to a minimum of approximately R 850 per year.

According to the respondent, the organisation does ongoing research on what practitioners need from a professional body. They have, however, found in their latest telephone survey that practitioners found it difficult to describe what they expect from PRISA. This is in contrast to literature that is clear on what the tasks of the professional body should be (Euprera, 2008; Inter-comm, 2005). In general, after prompting, the respondents who completed PRISA's survey agreed on professional development, international positioning through accreditation, events-management, and networking opportunities. These differ from the expectations formulated by the interview respondents who indicated that opportunities to plough back knowledge and experience into the profession, the sharing of knowledge on best practice and ideas, and the professional body taking a leadership role in the profession were most important to them (see section 5.2.2.5.2.).

In general, the professional body finds it easy to persuade junior people to join the organisation. However, many "… people drop out in the middle [of their careers] and then come back …". The respondent added that some senior practitioners said that they were not interested in membership of a professional body, but then do keep their APR status up to date to use it in documents.

The respondent stated that some practitioners tended to not inform others about belonging to PRISA for selfish reasons, namely to to be more competitive in the market. She argued that this trait was character driven.

5.3.3. Defining a Good Practitioner

5.3.3.1. THE IABC

The respondent argued that the role that the practitioner performs within the organisation will influence the contribution that s/he can make to organisational performance. At the entry level (junior level), practitioners can contribute through their technical skills (for instance writing and interview skills). At the level of team leader or manager, the practitioner would need to know the industry in which he/she works and should understand the influence of environmental factors on organisational strategy to be able to contribute to organisational performance.

The respondent further stated that the challenges for practitioners in South Africa are similar to those faced by IABC members in other countries, which in essence is the ability to apply communication knowledge to their specific environments. In South Africa, specifically, this would mean that the practitioner must be able to practise *good* corporate communication within a diverse team and stakeholder environment. For instance, practitioners need to be able to work with literate as well as illiterate people: “To work with people on a high level is easy ... the test is to explain difficult concepts to illiterates without talking ‘down to them’” [In Afrikaans: “Om met mense op ‘n hoë vlak te werk is maklik ... die toets is: kan jy moeilike begrippe aan ongeletterdes verduidelik sonder om te voel jy *talk down to them*”]. In addition to working in a unique environment, South African practitioners also face job scarcity and have to create their own jobs.

According to the respondent, a *not-so-good* practitioner would be one who does do not know how to apply his/her knowledge, and does not follow strategy. If they “... just wear short dresses and dispense drinks, but do not know why ...”, they will be *not so good* [In Afrikaans: Indien hulle “... net kort rokkies dra en drankies uitdeel maar nie weet hoekom dit gedoen word nie...” is hulle “nie so goed nie”]. The responsibility therefore rests on the practitioner to be able to explain and justify the purpose of what s/he is doing.

This view is similar to the argument as set out in section 3.7., and the views of the interview respondents (see section 5.2.2.6.) that public relations knowledge need to be adapted to the specific environment of each country. Literature, however, specifically points to the political ideology, economic system, degree of activism, culture, level of development, and the media systems and environment of the country that the practitioners needs to keep in mind (ref.

Bentele, 2004:492; Grunig, 2001:19; Sriramesh, 2003a:xxv; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:2), when considering their contribution to organisational performance.

5.3.3.2. PRISA

As mentioned before the respondent indicated that a practitioner who contributes to organisational performance is one who can apply theory in practice, think on the strategist level and have business knowledge. These aspects seem to be the challenge for practitioners globally. In literature it was also argued that strategic and business knowledge in education is important for the practitioner (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Puth, 1994:40-52; Steyn, 2000a:4). However, in agreement with Dozier *et al.* (1995:11) and Le Roux (2004:39), the respondent maintained that more than simply education is needed for a practitioner to be able to contribute to organisational performance.

In agreement with Grunig *et al.* (2001:184) and Dozier (1992:350-351), the respondent also added that one must keep in mind that some practitioners elect to remain technicians, while others strive to be strategists, which influences their career path and decisions taken, and ultimately their contribution to organisational performance.

In defining a *not-so-good practitioner* this respondent argued that it would be a person who is not up to date with skills, who does not develop his/her own team, lack leadership and management skills, and does not keep the Board updated on their activities. She equated a *not-so-good* practitioner to a *not-so-good manager*, as she argued the characteristics needed for both are similar. Specifically equating the practitioner and manager differs significantly from that mentioned by the interview respondents (see section 5.2.2.6.).

5.3.4. Variables Influencing Practitioners in Contributing to Organisational Performance

5.3.4.1. The IABC

The respondent focused on a number of individual-level variables:

- In agreement with the findings of the practitioner-respondent interviews (see section 5.2.2.1.7.), this respondent argued that the large number of people with a background in journalism entering the profession are negatively influencing the profession. This is contrary to the suggestions of Lauzen (1991:245) and Van Ruler and De Lange

(2003:155) who maintained that functions other than journalism were encroaching on the profession. The respondent posits that these people enter the profession because to them it "… looks glamorous" and they "… think the money is better …", but they do not understand what the discipline entails [In Afrikaans: Dit "… lyk glamorous…" en hulle ".. dink die geld is beter, maar hulle weet nie wat die dissipline behels nie"]. She compared this state of affairs with affirmative action appointments where people are appointed without the necessary skills and training (ref. Coetzee, 2005:2.9-2.11; Thomas & Jain, 2004:45), although the respondent supported the basic premise to correct the wrongs of the past.

- Education was also seen as important, as argued in section 3.4.2.1. Although the respondent argued that it could be difficult to obtain a position in an organisation if one does not have a formal education, and that formal education becomes very important at the managerial level, she would much prefer to appoint and work with a person that is inclined to and able to continuously learn. This is in agreement with the practitioner respondents' views that practitioners should strive for life-long learning. The respondent recognises that many organisations "… stare themselves blind against papers/degrees…", and may miss appointing good candidates in the process [In Afrikaans: Vele organisasies "… kyk nog vas teen papiere …" en mag dan die aansoeke van goeie kandidate miskyk].
- The respondent argued, similar to the argument of Grunig *et al.* (2001:4, 172, 180-181, 310) that gender only plays a role in that there are still more females than males in the profession, which influences salary discrepancies between male and female practitioners. The respondent reasoned that this is the case as "Women do not negotiate as well as men do … men tend to enforce blatant career promotion" [In Afrikaans: "Vroue beding nie so goed soos mans nie … mans doen blatante bevordering"]. Grunig *et al.* (2001:4, 172, 180-181, 310), however, argued that the reason for the salary discrepancies was that females are seen as less fit and competent in the workplace than males.
- The respondent argued that personality is a factor in any chosen career. She stated that people think that, "… talkative people are better than quieter people" [In Afrikaans: "… praterige persone is beter as stiller persone …"]. She also stated that people would notice when a person who is eloquent is not up to the job at hand: "People notice when loud, talkative people cannot do the job" [In Afrikaans: "Mense kom agter as grootbekke nie die werk kan doen nie"]. This could explain why being talkative is a personality trait that was not found in the literature study (see section 3.4.1.5.). This respondent did, however, mention that more than personality, it is important that the practitioner be able to create and implement strategies. The

interview respondents added that over and above personality, emotional maturity is important to the practitioner.

On the organisational-level the respondent mentioned, in concurrence with O'Neil (2003b:165), that management's view of communication is crucial to the practitioner (see section 3.5.3.1.): "Should management not believe in communication, you will never be able to be more than a technician" [In Afrikaans: "Indien bestuur nie glo aan kommunikasie nie, sal jy nooit meer as die tegniese rol vervul nie"]. Therefore, she argued that practitioners should be able to show their own value, and fight for their rightful place in the organisation.

On the professional-level the respondent argued that the fact that practitioners are not clear on what communication entails, damages the profession, as suggested in section 3.8.2.

5.3.4.2. PRISA

On the individual-level, the PRISA chairperson listed personality as a variable that could influence practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. The respondent stated that a good practitioner should be "… assertive, but not rude …", be empathetic, and a good listener. These personality traits are similar to those mentioned in literature (see section 3.4.1.5.).

The respondent argued that other individual-level variables are negated as organisations look at people's track records, qualifications, contribution to the professional body and, lastly, at their contribution to the community before appointing them. Affirmative action, concurring with literature (see section 3.4.1.2.), was however mentioned as one variable at individual-level that could still influence an appointment, regardless of the candidate's skills. The interview respondents, however, indicated that affirmative action has more far-reaching implications than only influencing the appointment of candidates (see section 5.2.2.1.8.).

The respondent agreed that many journalists enter the profession as they "…think it's easier and pay more". The respondent made a distinction between a journalist entering the profession at a technical level, and a journalist entering the profession at managerial level. To her mind, the journalists entering the profession at the managerial level have a better chance at being *good* at their jobs, as they have more managerial skills and understanding of the business. Similar to the practitioner respondents' and the IABC chairperson's view, and contrary to literature, this respondent also saw journalism as a function encroaching on public relations (ref. Lauzen, 1991:245; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155).

At the organisational-level, the respondent argued that only in some instances management's view of communication can influence the practitioner. This differs slightly from literature that suggests that management perceptions of the value of public reations are crucial to the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance (O'Neil, 2003a:165). She did however state that "… PR doesn't accept responsibility to make their function important". In accordance with the practitioner respondents, this respondent strongly feels that the practitioner should take responsibility and create recognition as there is "… not any help running around saying you are not recognised".

5.3.5. The Contribution of a Professional Body in Creating a *Good Practitioner*

5.3.5.1. The IABC

The IABC chairperson reported that belonging to a professional body has assisted her in her career and therefore she could respond to this question based on her experience. She states that the influence of professional bodies is crucial to the practitioner and would argue that it could at least contribute to 70% of the success rate that a practitioner has in contributing to organisational performance. She is of the opinion that membership of a professional body could be the basis on which to differentiate between practitioners.
The respondent did not elaborate on further issues that could, together with membership of a professional body, enhance the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

5.3.5.2. PRISA

The PRISA chairperson argued that, over and above the influence of the professional body, aspects such as education, background and personality would also play a role in sculpting the practitioner. She did argue that personality plays an important role in how the practitioner uses the professional body in that some people would be very dependent on the professional body, while others would only *drop in* at various intervals. The respondent felt that if practitioners belonged to professional bodies, it could help to improve their performance by 70–80%. However, she stated that the impact of the professional body also depended on the specific organisation and related industry in which the the practitioner is working.

According to this respondent, the main contribution of a professional body is that it can assist practitioners to learn to speak *business language* by offering short courses, and can assist them in keeping up to date via CPD courses.

5.3.6. Synopsis: Professional Body Interviews

In essence, both actions and focus of the professional bodies correlate with the viewpoint of the respondents on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. The IABC offers networking, accreditation and enhancement of the image of the function, as it emphasises the skills, strategic knowledge and the ability of practitioners to apply their knowledge. PRISA in turn focuses on skills development and career-path progress by accreditation and CPD courses. The focus on general management skills ties in with PRISA's view that general management skills are important for the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Although both the professional bodies emphasised the importance of education for practitioners, there is a difference in what is *thought* to be needed. PRISA tends to focus more on technical skills courses that should assist the practitioner to become accredited, while the drive of the IABC is more towards creating a continuous learning environment within a strategic framework.

It is interesting to note that the professional bodies saw one of their roles as educating management on the value of the corporate communication function. The practitioner respondents, however, strongly felt that the professional bodies should not interfere in their working environment, as it would undermine their authority. Both the professional bodies, however, seem to take note of this view. Therefore their effors to enhance the image of the function has focused on, for instance, conferences and issuing media releases. Specifically PRISA was clear on the fact that, although a professional body could educate management, the practitioner remains responsible for creating recognition for their own work in their work environment.

Both the professional bodies suggested developing a limited cooperation model. However, enhanced cooperation between the two bodies and others within the business environment could deliver positive results.

5.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the qualitative data gathered and the results of the semi-structured interviews with the four corporate communication practitioners who acted as respondents were discussed. This was followed by a discussion of the professional body chairpersons' views.

The respondents mentioned many variables influencing the practitioner and could describe the nuances associated with the variables in detail. They were able to confirm and expand most of the findings in literature and also pointed out variables not previously found in literature. In their view all the variables influencing practitioners are categorised into a single group.

In essence respondents of the professional bodies broke down the variables influencing practitioners into a few elements that are regarded to affect the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance (such as education, management's view of the function, and the influence of encroachment from the field of journalism).

The findings discussed in this chapter, together with the literature findings, were used to compile the questionnaire that was sent to respondents in the quantitative phase of the study. The views of these respondents on the importance of various variables – as discussed above – was meaningful as they provided an indication of the most important variables influencing the practitioner, as illustrated in the creation of the SEM model (see section 8.3.).

The next chapter will focus on reporting the findings of the quantitative data. An overview of the characteristics of the respondents will be given, followed by a discussion on the questionnaire findings per construct tested.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS DESCRIBING RESPONDENTS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed the qualitative data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with four practitioners and the chairpersons of the two corporate communication professional bodies.

This chapter aims to discuss the results of the quantitative data collected from the 262 questionnaires received after contacting the organisations listed in the *South African Top 300 National Companies List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). In this chapter attention will be given to the analysis of the data as described by the respondents. Topics are, amongst others, the following:

- demographic data;
- data on the respondents' experience of the profession;
- data on the respondents' career experience;
- data on the organisational environment in which respondents work; and
- the role that the respondents are currently performing.

The data provides an understanding of the experiences of the respondents' in public relations, and in their working environment. Chapter six thus provides the *context* for Chapter seven, where the respondents' perceptions of the variables that influence their contribution to organisational performance, shall be discussed.

The data reported in this chapter was analysed with the assistance of the Statistical Consultation Services at the North West University that used the programmes Statistica (StatSoft Inc., 2007) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2007). Frequency tables, correlations and differentiations, reliability calculations and factor analysis were used as described in chapter four (see section 4.3.4.8.). Results are only reported where statistically and practically significant. Missing values are excluded from the analysis, which means that where reported, n-values could differ.

6.2. RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The respondents' demographic data included typical demographic information on gender, race, age, language abilities, and education, as well as data on their worldview and the personal characteristics most highly valued in practitioners and – living in South Africa – the influence crime has had on their work performance.

6.2.1. Gender

Similar to other countries (ref. Kim & Reber, 2008:338), data on the respondents' gender indicated that the corporate communication profession in South Africa is predominantly female, as 80.2% (n=210) of the respondents were female, and only 19.8% (n=52) were male. Two different studies in South Africa, namely that of Holtzhauzen (2005:409), and Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) (see section 3.4.1.3.) reported that the percentage of females in the profession in South Africa were 70% and 64% respectively.

The difference between the findings reported in literature and those in this study could be owing to the fact that this study did not only focus on practitioners who belong to a professional corporate communication body, such as PRISA or the IABC, as was the case in the aforementioned two studies.

6.2.2. Race

Most of the respondents were white (80.5%, n=210), with a small number of black respondents (11.9%, n=31), and an even smaller number of Asian, Coloured and Indian respondents (7.6%, n=20). The results of the differing percentages according to race could merely be a factor of those who selected to respond to the questionnaire (19.9% of the population). Therefore one cannot make deductions on the success of affirmative action or the *white face* of the profession based on this data (see section 3.7.2.).

This data, however, does provide some information on the racial profile of South African corporate communication practitioners in top performing organisations, a variable that had not been included in other studies (ref. De Wet *et al.*, 2008:1-31; Holtzhausen, 2005:407-416; Niemann-Struweg & Meintjies, 2008:224-229).

6.2.3. Age

Very few respondents were younger than 25 years of age (6.1%, n=16), or fell into the category of those 51 to 60 years of age (11.5%, n=30), or even in the category of those older than 60 years (3.1%, n=8). Overall, 79.3% (n=208) of the respondents were between 25 and 50 years of age, although most fell into the 31-40 age category (35.0%, n=92) category. This can be explained and is supported by the fact that the profession is still very young. This is also in line with other international findings, such as those of Beard (1997:12) and the IABC (2002:24).

These findings are similar to those of Holtzhausen (2005:409), Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008:227) and De Wet *et al.* (2008:3) who reported respectively that practitioners have a median age of 38, and are mostly between 20 and 49 years of age.

The findings could also indicate that *older practitioners* tend to exit the profession (go on pension or find other employment) from the age of 51 onwards or are even asked to retire to allow room for new affirmative action appointments (see section 3.4.1.2.). This, in turn, could indicate that older practitioners, who are more experienced, are not available in the practice for mentorship, which could lead to a loss of valuable knowledge to the profession.

As expexted, age correlated, positively with the respondents' monthly income ($r=0.441$, $p<0.000$, $n=250$), years of experience in corporate communication ($r=0.678$, $p<0.000$, $n=255$), and years working for a specific organisation ($r=0.544$, $p<0.000$, $n=260$).

In the semi-structured interviews the respondents indicated that age should not necessarily be viewed as equal to experience. However, the findings discussed above indicate that age and experience do correlate positively. The point made in the interviews, however, is that the type of experience (within the relational and strategic paradigms) is more important than simply all or any experience (see section 5.2.1.5.).

When investigating the differences between age and the other demographic data, Kruskal-Wallis tests (see section 4.3.4.8.2.) indicated that there are some statistically and practically significant differences between age and role performed ($H=8.006$; $p=0.018$). The effect size, by using the Z-value from the Mann-Whitney test, calculated a practical significance of $d=0.22$ and $d=0.21$ between the manager and strategist, and the technician and strategist roles, respectively. These values therefore indicate a significant difference between, on the one hand, the technician role, and on the other hand, the managerial and strategist roles.

A cross-tabulation was done to investigate this trend (see table 6.1). This table indicates that respondents between the ages of 31 and 40 years of age enact the manager role, while those performing the strategist role were between 41 and 50 years of age. As can be expected, older practitioners than those enacting the technical role, perform the managerial role. Similarly, older practitioners than those enacting the managerial (and technical) role, perform the strategist role.

Table 6.1: Percentage of respondents per role and age

Actual role	Age (% of respondents)						Total	N
	Younger than 25	25-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Older than 60		
Technician	8.3	24.2	34.8	16.7	12.9	3.0	100	132
Manager	4.8	21.4	40.5	20.2	9.5	3.6	100	84
Strategist	–	13.5	21.6	56.8	5.4	2.7	100	37
TOTAL								**253**

6.2.4. Language Abilities

6.2.4.1. Home language

When indicating their home language, more than half of the respondents (53.7%, n=139) confirmed that their home language is English, whilst 29% (n=75) indicated that Afrikaans was their home language, and 4.2% (n=11) indicated that they spoke both English and Afrikaans at home. A small number of respondents (11.2%, n=29) reported their home language was Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana or Sotho.

Table 6.2: Home language

Home language	%	n
English	53.7	139
Afrikaans	29.0	75
Both English / Afrikaans	4.2	11
Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, and other	11.2	29
English & Other (German, Greek)	1.5	4
Portuguese	0.4	1
TOTAL	**100**	**259**

6.2.4.2. Multilingualism

The question on language proficiency was a multiple-response question. As this is the case, the total reported percentages will not add up to 100%. The following table summarises the data on respondents' language proficiency and includes all the languages that the respondents can speak, read and write:

Table 6.3: Language proficiency

Languages spoken	% (N=262)					
	Speak %	Speak n	Read %	Read n	Write %	Write n
English	100.0	262	100.0	262	100.0	262
Afrikaans	88.5	232	90.5	237	79.0	207
Zulu	17.2	45	9.9	26	7.3	19
Xhosa	6.5	17	5.3	14	4.2	11
Sotho	9.2	24	6.5	17	3.8	10
Tswana	5.0	13	4.2	11	3.8	10
Tsonga	1.1	3	0.8	2	0.8	2
Pedi	1.9	5	1.5	4	0.8	2
Other black languages*	1.9	5	0.8	2	0.4	1
French	5.7	15	5.0	13	3.4	9
German	7.3	19	7.6	20	6.9	18
Dutch	1.9	5	2.7	7	0.8	2
Italian	1.1	3	0.8	2	0.4	1
Greek	0.8	2	0.8	2	0.8	2
Spanish	0.8	2	1.1	3	0.8	2
Portuguese	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.4	1
Hebrew	0.8	2	0.8	2	0.4	1
Hindi	0.4	1	–	–	–	–
Other languages**	1.9	5	1.5	4	1.1	3

**Includes Venda, Swahili and Ndebele and Ghanese*
***Includes Russian, Polish and Arabic*

All the respondents could speak, and read and write English, which is accepted as the language of business in South African. A very large number could also speak (88.5%, n=232), read (90.5%, n=237) and write (79.0%, n=207) Afrikaans. The third most widely spoken language is Zulu (17.2%, n=45) followed by Sotho at 9.2% (n=24) and Xhosa at 6.5% (n=17).

The languages that were read or written followed the same pattern as indicated in the languages that could be spoken, namely English, followed by Afrikaans and then Zulu. With the exception of English and Afrikaans, fewer respondents could read and write any other language than they could speak.

Only a few respondents were fluent in languages other than English, Afrikaans and Zulu (for example Tsonga, Pedi, and so forth). Interestingly, almost as many people could speak, read and write French and German as those able to speak, read and write Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana.

When comparing the number of respondents who indicated their home language as English, and those that indicated that they could speak, read and write English, it would seem that bilinguilism is indicated in almost half the cases. Therefore, the assumption can be made that many practitioners are able to understand, and even speak, more than one language – as suggested to be beneficial in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.2.1.9.).

6.2.5. Education and Skills

Respondents were asked to indicate their qualifications (*not* specifically pertaining to corporate communication) in a *multi-response question* (total percentage will therefore exceed 100%). Except for two respondents, all the respondents had completed Matric (final year at school), and more than half the respondents (51.9%, n=136) obtained a certificate or diploma. Thirty-four percent (n=89) had completed a three-year degree. Almost a quarter (23.7%, n=62) have post-graduate degrees (Honours, Masters or Doctoral degrees). The results showed that 56.5% (n=148) of the respondents had obtained a/any degree or a post-graduate degree (In calculating this number, multiple mentions were eliminated).

Respondents were then requested to indicate their corporate communication qualifications. Since this was also a *multi-response question* (respondents could indicate having a degree and a diploma, or more than one degree), the total percentage for this question will not add up to 100%. Also note that CPD courses were not listed as a response option for this question, as the *level* of the qualification was considered, not the *type* of qualification.

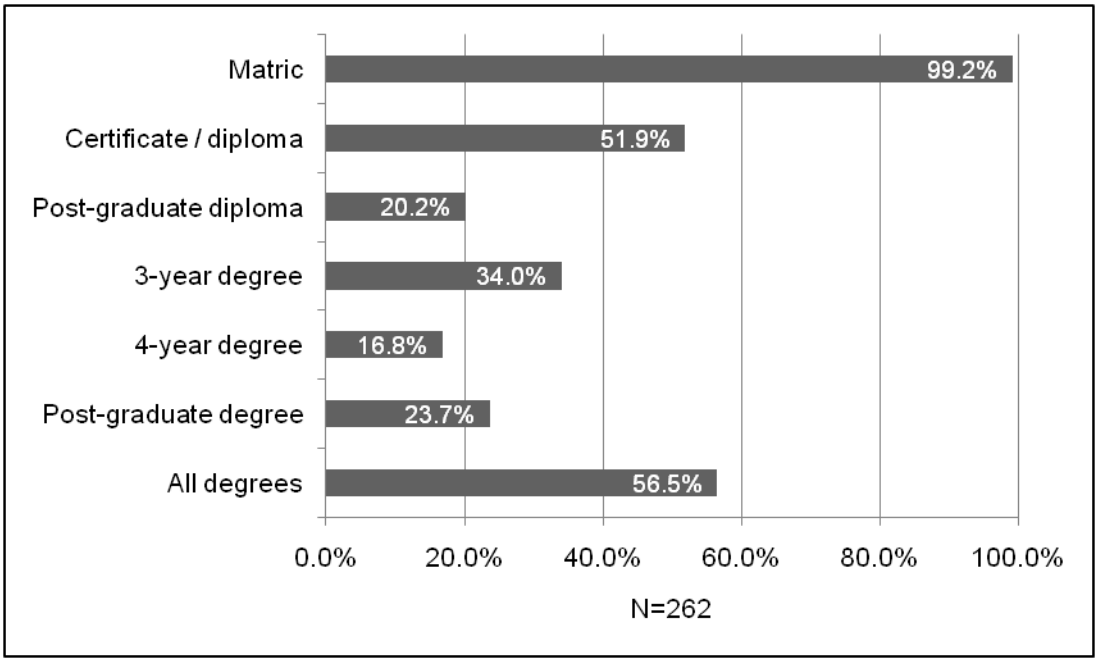


Figure 6.1: General educational level of respondents

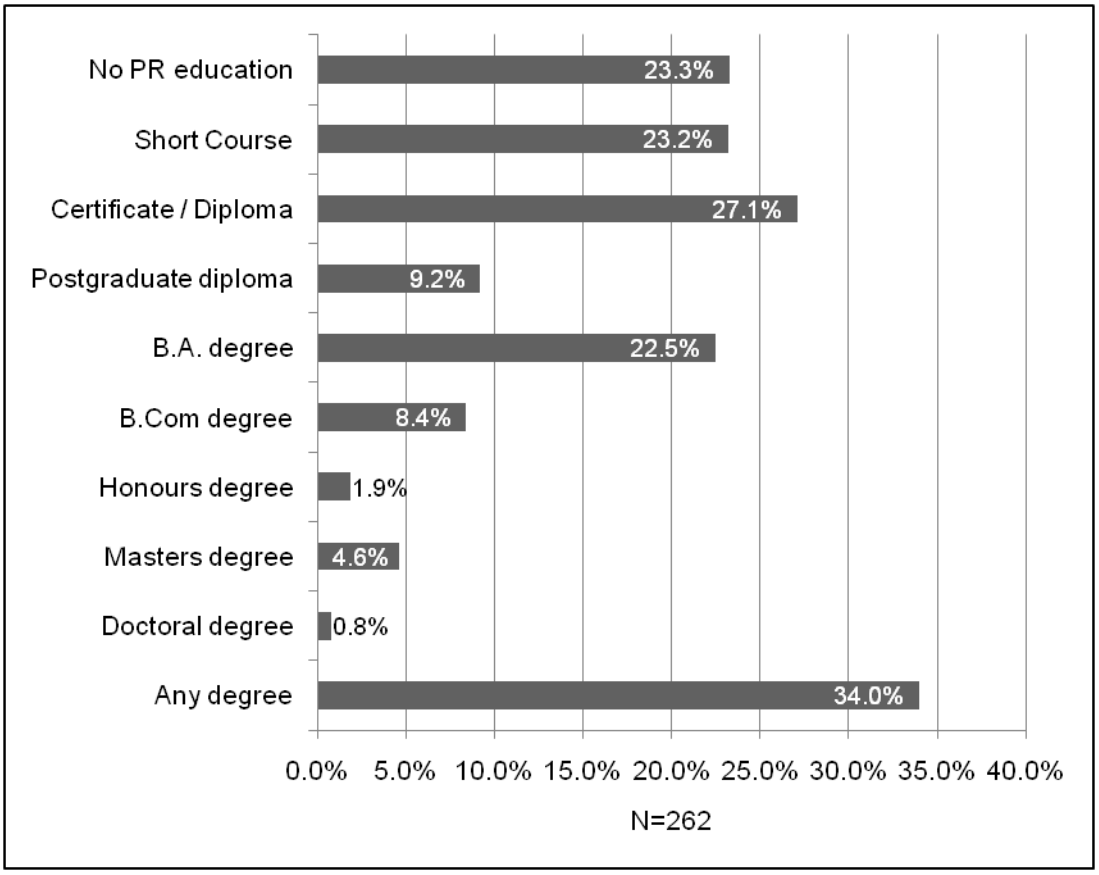


Figure 6.2: Respondents' level of education in public relations

Almost a quarter of the respondents, namely 23.3% (n=61), indicated that they had no qualifications in corporate communication. Some respondents had attended a short course or had completed diplomas (23.3%, n=61 and 27.1%, n=71, respectively). While 22.5% (n=59) held a BA degree in corporate communication, only 8.4% (n=22) of the respondents had obtained a B.Com degree and 6.5% (n=17) held a postgraduate degree (Honours, Masters or Doctoral degree) in corporate communication.

It would seem that there is a lack of formal corporate communication education for those pratising the function. Specifically the small number of respondents who had obtained a B.Com degree in corporate communication and/or a post-graduate qualification, is worrisome. Groenewald (1998b:19) found the background obtained through a B.Com degree (business background) to be necessary, and various other authors (Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4) argued it to be beneficial, for a practitioner to be able to contribute to organisational performance. Furthermore it is acknowledged that in many cases, knowledge of research and evaluation procedures is usually only gained at a Masters or Doctoral level (Grunig, in Plowman, 1998:242).

When comparing the respondents' general and corporate communication qualifications, it seems that some respondents have qualifications that are not specific to corporate communication. Respondents are therefore well educated, but not necessarily in corporate communication, although they are performing corporate communication tasks. This implies that respondents most probably lack the necessary managerial, strategic and business knowledge of corporate communication within the strategic and relational framework (Boynton, 2006:325-330; Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39, 42; Plowman, 1998:243; 2005:131; Steyn, 2000a:4; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009:424), which would assist practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. This knowledge, that respondents then seem *not* to have, was considered by the respondnets of the semi-structured interviews to be crucial for contributing to organisational performance. These respondents were, however, sceptical about the value of South African university qualifications and indicated that a lifelong learning attitude may possibly be even more important than formal public relations education (see section 5.2.2.1.2.). However, the results of the questionnaires still raises the question as to the knowledge of respondents about corporate communication and about conducting their work in such a way that it can contribute to organisational performance.

As shown in table 6.4, the findings of this study differ considerably from those reported by other researchers. This could once again be due to the different populations used by this

study and those of the mentioned authors, which only focused on professional body members (see section 1.3.1.1.).

Table 6.4: Comparison of practitioner education levels

Qualification	Niemann-Struweg & Meintjies (2008:227)	De Wet *et al.* (2008:3)	Holtz-hausen (2005:409)	Petersen *et al.* (2002:11)	As per figure 6.1: General education	As per figure 6.2: PR education
3-year degree	(or diploma) 27%	–	–	–	34.0%	30.9%
4-year degree	(or diploma) 37%	–	–	–	16.8%	
Honours degree	–	26.9%	–	–	23.7%	6.5%
Masters degree	25%	19.2%	–	14.5%		
Doctorate	–	7.7%	–	1%		
All the above / any degree level	–	–	90%	78%	56.5%	34%

Two more comments on the education of practitioners need to be made. The interviewees pointed out that only education within the strategic and relational paradigms would equip the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance. Furthermore, both the interviewees and chairperson of the IABC agreed that even more than formal education, an attitude of life-long learning would mostly benefit the practitioner.

6.2.6. Most Highly Valued Personal Characteristics

Respondents were asked to rate the top five personal characteristics that a practitioner should possess in order to contribute to organisational performance, ranked in order of importance from a list of ten possible characteristics. The following table shows the list of personal characteristics that respondents indicated could best assist the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance, ranked from the most important to the least important. The prioritisation was organised according to the percentage of respondents who

selected each characteristic as their first option (most important). Interestingly, except for *personality in general*, the mean scores confirm this rating (a score closer to *one* being considered higher, where *one* indicated the most important and *five* least important).

Table 6.5: Most highly valued personal characteristics

Characteristics	Percentage of indications that this is the most important characteristic	N	Mean scores (rated from 1 = most important, to, 5 = least important)
1. Personal credibility (taking responsibility, reliable, trustworthy)	38.5	205	2.14
2. Resourcefulness (finding solutions, lateral thinking, taking initiative)	36.3	202	2.14
3. Being an energetic person, positive attitude towards life, enthusiastic, passionate	29.8	176	2.45
4. Emotional intelligence, maturity, understanding human dynamics	24.4	172	2.58
5. Ability to work fast and accurately, multi-tasking	19.1	163	2.58
6. Having a driven nature, assertiveness	18.3	115	2.59
7. Being open-minded (open to ideas, people, diversity)	17.2	119	2.61
8. Personality in general	15.3	87	2.44
9. Ability to digest information rapidly	13.4	104	2.61
10. Being streetwise	3.1	41	3.10

From the number of respondents who selected characteristics it is interesting to see that *personal credibility* and *resourcefulness* were marked by most respondents and also filled the top two positions on the ratings list. The highly rated *personal credibility* finding is similar to the *integrity* and *trustful* characteristics suggested by Bhimani (1995: 29), Bowman and Ellis (1977: 275), Budd (1992:37), Nielsen (2006) and Sharpe (2000). Practitioners also suggested in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.2.1.10.) that *personal credibility* was important as the practitioner should be trusted with information and thereby able to contribute to organisational performance. *Being streetwise* was placed in the last position by the respondents.

In the semi-structured interviews the respondents emphasised *emotional intelligence and maturity* (although they did not complete a priority list of characteristics), more than what is suggested with the questionnaire findings, which rate it in fourth place. This discrepancy could explain the fact that the interview respondents might have experienced the value of *emotional maturity*, or, alternatively, that the definition of the components of *emotional maturity*, is vague. More importantly, however, the interview respondents agreed that *emotional maturity* would assist with *personal credibility*, which was rated first in the questionnaires. In literature, both Yeomans (2007:213) and L A Grunig (2008:121) allude to the importance of *emotional maturity* to the practitioner.

The semi-structured interview respondents most importantly indicated that practitioner personality and behaviour should reinforce one another. The chairperson of the IABC added that personal characteristics are a factor in any career.

The characteristic of *being streetwise* positively correlated with the practitioner spending time on the tasks of:

- *Developing corporate communication strategy that supports corporate strategy* ($r=0.344$, $p<0.028$, $n=41$),
- *Acting as an 'early warning system' to top management before issues erupt into crises* ($r=0.419$, $p<0.006$, $n=41$),
- and the practitioners' indication of time spent on managerial tasks ($r=0.333$, $p<0.033$, $n=41$).

In essence this implies that practitioners who consider *being streetwise* as important are more likely to be strategists, as the abovementioned tasks all fall within the responsibilities of a strategist. Therefore, one could argue that *being streetwise* seems more important for the public relations strategist.

The characteristic of *being open-minded (open to ideas, people, diversity)* positively correlated ($r=0.316$, $p<0.000$, $n=119$) with the technical task of *producing audiovisual materials for presentations,* which essentially can be described as a creative task. Being open-minded thus relates to the practitioner's creativity.

6.2.7. Practitioner Worldview

In order to gain an understanding of the South African practitioners' worldview, practitioners could indicate their agreement with either a Afrocentric or European worldview.

Table 6.6: Afrocentric versus Eurocentric worldview: Findings

Afrocentric worldview (A)	Level of agreement (%)					European worldview (B)	N
	Fully agree with A	Agree with A	Agree with both A + B	Agree with B	Fully agree with B		
i. I will measure my success in life according to interpersonal relationships	16.5	15.7	51.0	9.4	7.5	i. I will measure my success in life according to the acquisition of a good job, lifestyle	255
ii. All people share a common bond	42.0	27.8	24.7	4.7	0.8	ii. All people are unique and different	255
iii. One should live in harmony with nature	25.9	31.0	31.8	9.4	2.0	iii. One should manage nature to get the most out of it	255
iv. Team achievements are important	13.3	10.2	71.0	4.3	1.2	iv. Individual achievements are important	255
v. The elderly can offer good advice	9.5	11.5	69.2	5.9	4.0	v. One should acquire one's own knowledge	253
vi. Interdependence is good	5.1	8.7	68.9	11.8	5.5	vi. Competition is good	254

It is interesting to note that in four of the above statements the practitioners mostly agreed with both an Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldview. In only two statements they favoured one specific worldview:

- On the question of *all people share a common bond* (Afrocentric), most practitioners *agreed* (27.8%, n=71) and *agreed fully* (42.0%, n=107), thus leaning towards Afrocentrism. However, 22.7% *agreed* with both statements. This is in agreement with the suggestion of Van Heerden (2004:121) that practitioners need to understand people as social beings in order to be successful in Africa.
- On the question of *living in harmony with nature* (Afrocentric), 56.9% (n=145) of respondents *agreed* or *fully agreed*, thus again leaning towards an Afrocentric worldview, while 31.8% of the respondents *agreed* with both statements.

In summary, one could argue, therefore, that practitioners have a relatively balanced Eurocentric and Afrocentric worldview, and sometimes lean more towards the Afrocentric worldview regarding nature and human relationships. This balanced worldview, is argued in

literature, to lead the practitioner to be sensitive and more successful in the South African environment (ref. Van Heerden, 2004:121). In contrast Petersen *et al.* (2002:11) reported that half of the respondents in their study had a combination of Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews, but were learning more towards Eurocentric views.

Interestingly when referring to worldview in the semi-structured interviews, the respondents indicated that it would influence practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. However, they referred to the strategic and relational worldview that the practitioner should have as stated in section 5.2.1.5. These worldviews are argued to be close to, or compatible with, the Afrocentric worldview (see section 3.4.1.6.).

6.2.8. Influence of Crime on the Practitioner

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had been negatively influenced by crime – a reality in the South African environment (Business Anti-Corruption Portal, 2009; Jacobs, 2008; see section 3.7.5.). This included, as specified in the question, whether they were directly or indirectly negatively influenced by crime in functioninig and/or doing their jobs.

Only around a quarter of the practitioners, 24.4% (n=64), indicated that they had been influenced by crime. The rest, 75.6% (n=198), indicated that they had not been influenced by crime and that it did not negatively influence their job.

6.3. RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE PROFESSION

In order to understand how the respondents have experienced the corporate communication profession, the terminology used to describe the function, and views on the reasons why people move to the function, as well as membership of a professional body were probed.

6.3.1. Standarised Terminology for the Function

Most respondents 74.3% (n=191) referred to *corporate communication* when referring to the function and around one quarter (24.5%, n=63) referred to the function as *public relations*. In only 1.2% (n=3) of the cases practitioners referred to both *corporate communication* and *public relations*. One could argue, therefore, that since almost three quarters of the

respondents used the term *corporate communication*, the term for the profession is fairly standardised.

Literature (see section 3.8.2.) suggests that there is great confusion over the terminology used to describe the function, which leads to, or develops due to, a lack of clarity in the definition of the function and thus burdens the profession with many challenges. The respondents in the semi-structured interviews, although mostly using the term *corporate communication*, agreed that there was no clear definition of the function in business, and argued that the profession was still developing and growing towards such a definition.

The quantitative results of this study, however, indicate that, although all the respondents do not agree on the terminology for the function, there is not that much confusion on the definition, as suggested in literature. One could argue that agreement on the terminology used for the function, could be indicative of a clearer description of the function. However, one should be wary of reaching such conclusions, as the definition of the function and terminology used to describe the function are distinct from one another. It is possible that there could be some agreement on the terminology used, but not agreement on the definition of the function.

6.3.2. Professional Legacy

In this multi-response question, the respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on the reasons why people would move to the corporate communication profession from another profession. Some responses were listed and respondents were also able to add their own options.

Over and above the reasons given, the following reasons for people moving to the corporate communication function were mentioned by one respondent each:

- Corporate communication is combined with the human resources function
- Corporate communication gets one out of the office
- Corporate communication gives one the ability to strategically influence companies
- Corporate communication gives one the opportunity to work across functions in the company
- Because people did not succeed in another profession
- People are moved into corporate communication as they are perceived to have life experience

Table 6.7: Reasons why people move to the corporate communication profession

Reason for moving	%	n (N=262)
It seems interesting	50.0	131
They like working with people	44.3	116
It looks like fun	35.9	94
People think it is an easy job	30.9	81
It's got status	25.2	66
Money is better	23.7	62
Diversity of tasks (added by respondents)	2.7	7
Making a difference / for the greater good (added by respondents)	2.3	6
It looks like a nice challenge (added by respondents)	1.5	4
Glamour (added by respondents)	1.5	4

It is interesting and positive to note that two reasons given why people move into the profession, also link to the essence of the definition of the function as given in section 1.8.1. They are supported by the explanation of the relational, reflective, two-way symmetrical and feminist paradigms (see sections 2.2.2.1., 2.2.2.2., 2.2.2.3. and 2.2.2.4.) – for example, *diversity of tasks* and *making a difference / for the greater good* – were added by respondents. Unfortunately, these two reasons scored poorly, as they were mentioned by only a few respondents. This finding could possibly be related back to the legacy of the profession (the view of the function and its history of *spin doctoring* and the like; see section 3.8.1.), and even the vague definition of the function (see section 3.8.2.).

6.3.3. Membership of a Professional Body

Membership of a professional body influenced how respondents experienced the function, as these bodies could support the practitioner with information on the discipline and networking opportunities. Respondents were requested to indicate all the professional bodies they belong to in a multiple-response question.

Almost two thirds of the respondents (63.7%, n=167) did not belong to any professional body. In literature O'Connor and Falconi (2003:2) suggested that non-membership could be as high as 92% (see section 3.8.5.1.). The interviewees confirmed this finding by indicating that they ceased their membership of professional corporate communication bodies as the organisations' offerings were lacking.

Only 21.4% (n=56) belonged to a communication association, such as IABC, PRISA, SACOMM, CIPR and South African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI)[20]. A few respondents belonged to finance, marketing, editorial, human resources, general business, women's and other associations. This could indicate the discipline from whence practitioners joined corporate communication. The number of respondents belonging specifically to women's associations that assist and support women in business, is also interesting.

Table 6.8: Practitioners' membership of professional bodies

Professional bodies	% (Duration of membership)					Total % of respondents	n
	< 2 years	2 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 20 years	> 20 years		
Not a member						64.0	167
Communication Associations	2.7	8.1	5.0	2.3	1.9	20.0	52
Finance Associations	0.4	–	–	0.4	0.8	1.9	5
Marketing Associations	–	1.2	1.2	0.4	–	2.7	7
Editorial Associations	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.2	2.7	7
Human Resources Associations	0.4	0.8	–	–	–	1.1	3
General Business Associations	0.4	1.5	–	0.4	–	2.3	6
Other Associations	1.6	0.8	–	–	–	2.3	6
Women's associations	0.8	0.8	0.4	1.1	–	3.1	8
TOTAL						**100.1**	**261**

Table 6.9 summarises the number of respondents belonging to communication associations. The number of respondents in this table does not match the number of respondents indicated in the table above, as seven respondents indicated that they belonged to more than one communication association.

[20] *For the purposes of this study South African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) is categorised as a 'communication association' as it focusses on event management.*

Just more than 17% (17.3%; n=42) of the respondents belonged to PRISA and 6.7% (n=16) belonged to the IABC. Only two respondents indicated that they were members of SACOMM, and only one respondent belonged to CIPR and SAACI.

Thus it appears that those people who are members of PRISA were members of this professional body for a longer time than the respondents who are members of the IABC.

Table 6.9: Years membership of corporate communication professional bodies

Professional bodies	%					Total % of respondents	n
	< 2 years	2 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 20 years	> 20 years		
Not a member						74.2	167
IABC	0.9	3.6	0.9	1.3	–	6.7	16
PRISA	2.7	5.8	5.3	2.7	0.9	17.3	42
SACOMM	–	–	0.9	–	–	0.9	2
IPRA	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
CIPR	–	0.4	–	–	–	0.4	1
SAACI	–	0.4	–	–	–	0.4	1
TOTAL						**100.0**	**229**

The employer in most cases paid the respondents' professional membership (70.2%, n=73). However, some respondents (28.8%, n=30) paid their own membership. Only one respondent indicated that s/he shared the membership costs with the employer.

6.3.4. Synopsis of Respondents' Experience of the Corporate Communication Profession

The respondents firstly seemed to agree with the use of the terminology *corporate communication* for the function. As indicated, however, one should not directly equate the use of terminology with a clear definition of the function. Although the respondents indicated that there was no confusion with the terminology for the function, it is possible that there could still be differences in the definition of the function. The semi-structured interview respondents, however, made a strong case for the vague definition of the function, as suggested in literature (see section 5.2.2.5.4.).

Furthermore, most respondents did not belong to a professional body, or more specifically a corporate communication professional body, even though their employers in most cases paid for professional body membership. Such membership could possibly provide respondents with valuable information regarding professional practice. However, the interviewees indicated the reason for their non-membership was that the professional bodies' offering was lacking and that the information they needed from a professional body could be gathered from other sources.

Differing form the suggestion made by the chairpersons of the two professional bodies, in most cases the respondent's employers paid for the respondent's membership, negating the argument that membership costs were too high for an individual to pay, as a reason why people do not join the organisations. However, specifically in tough economic times, organisations become more cost conscious, which could influence their willingness to pay for employees' professional membership.

6.4. RESPONDENTS' CAREER EXPERIENCES

Some aspects of the respondents' career experience will now be discussed. This includes information on their career progression (years worked for the specific organisation, years worked in corporate communication, and corporate communication experience), issues faced in building their career (mentorship, stereotyping and time taken out of their career), as well as information on their current position (job title, acting as a consultant or not, and monthly income).

6.4.1. Job Title

The respondents' job titles varied extensively. The titles of the practitioners were captured from the questionnaires and then coded as explained and illustrated in table 4.7, section 4.3.4.6. The percentages of respondents per group of titles are shown in table 6.10:

Table 6.10: Job titles

Titles	%	n
Communication practitioners, officers or specialists or communication task specific titles – not on the managerial level	24.6	55
Communication practitioners on the managerial level	18.7	42
Titles referring to people in the human resources function	16.5	37
Title associated with being responsible for a client account, thus providing consultation services	11.2	25
Titles referring to people in the marketing function	10.7	24
Titles referring to people in general management functions	4.5	10
Titles referring to people in the combined marketing and communication function	4.0	9
Administrative titles	3.1	7
Titles referring to the top manager in the company on board level	2.7	6
Titles referring to corporate or public affairs specifically	1.8	4
Titles referring to people in the finance function	1.3	3
Titles referring to people in the combined marketing and human resources function	0.9	2
TOTAL	**100**	**224**

Almost one quarter (24.6%, n=55) of the respondents were referred to in their title as practitioners, officers or specialists, with communication specifically mentioned. The number of practitioners on the managerial level who specifically mentioned communication was 18.7% (n=42). This means that just over 40% (43.3%, n=97) of the practitioners have a communication related reference in the titles assigned to them.

In some cases, corporate communication is seen as part of public affairs, which is regarded as a broader function than corporate communication and which often includes corporate social investment. However, a very small number of respondents have a title pertaining to corporate affairs (1.8%, n=4).

Interestingly enough only 3.1% (n=7) of the practitioners have administrative titles, possibly indicating that only a few respondents who practice corporate communication are employed in administrative positions.

Just over 10% (10.7%, n=24) of the respondents have marketing titles and 4% (n=9) have titles that combine marketing and communication. This small number of respondents with a

marketing related title could indicate that marketing was not encroaching on corporate communication to the extent suggested in literature (Lauzen, 1991:245; see section 3.5.3.3.). However, the number of practitioners reporting to the marketing function is also an indication of marketing's encroachment on corporate communication. However, this was not tested here.

From the table one can calculate that almost 40% of the respondents practicing communication did not have titles that represented the discipline, and could be experiencing encroachment from other disciplines. In literature the focus has been on marketing's encroachment of the function (see section 3.5.3.3.), and in the interviews on journalists' encroachment of the function (see section 5.2.2.1.2.). However looking at the titles, it seemed as if human resources may also present a challenge to the function in terms of encroachment. These findings do, however, tend to show more agreement with Van Ruler and De Lange (2003:155) who posit that encroachment is done by various functions such as general management, marketing, office management, human resources and even finance.

Interestingly one can gather from the titles, that other functions such as marketing and human resources also encounter encroachment.

From the above discussion it is clear that there is no specifically accepted title for a corporate communication practitioner. Particularly where the person was not on the managerial level, the words practitioner, officer, consultant and coordinator were used to describe the job title. Thus there was no accepted norm for titles to describe the level at which the respondents operated. Furthermore, the use of the word *communication* versus *communications* and titles that only depicted one aspect of the communication function, contributes to this problem. The myriad of job titles do, however, indicate that the function is still vaguely defined, as the titles can create confusion and inconsistent perceptions of what the function is, and what it is supposed to deliver and focus on.

6.4.2. Consultant or Not

The respondent's career goals could include, amongst others staying with an organisation or becoming a consultant, as well as selecting to work full time or part time. The practitioner's view of communication could then also influence how s/he sees a possible future within the profession.

Most of the respondents were employed by their organisation (84.5%, n=218) and only 15.5% (n=40) were consultants. Only 11.2% (n=25) of the respondents also had a title that referred to them as consultants (see section 6.4.1. above). Since communication consultation companies were not included in the sample (the sample only included the top performing organisations, see section 4.3.4.1.), this indicates that those respondents who indicated that they are consultants appear to be based at the organisation, as if they were full time employees of the organisation.

Most practitioners also selected to work full time 95.3% (n=246), with only 4.7% (n=12) of the practitioners working part time.

6.4.3. Monthly Income

Most respondents earned between R 10 001 and R 30 000 per month before tax. A total of 29.6% (n=74) of respondents earned more than R 30 000 per month.

Table 6.11: Monthly income before tax

Salary: monthly income before tax	%	n
R 0 – R 10 000	13.2	33
R 10 001 – R 20 000	32.8	82
R 20 001 – R 30 000	24.4	61
R 30 001 – R 40 000	16.0	40
R 40 001 – R 50 000	5.2	13
More than R50 001	8.4	21
TOTAL	**100.0**	**250**

As mentioned in section 6.2.3., monthly income positively correlated with respondent age ($r=0.441$, $p<0.000$, $n=250$); and age, in turn with respondents performing the managerial and strategist roles ($H=8.006$; $p=0.018$; $d=0.22$ for the difference between manager and strategist; $d=0.21$ for the difference between technician and strategist). This indicates the seniority associated with the managerial and strategist roles.

These findings were further investigated by means of a Kruskal-Wallis test to determine the difference between monthly income and the actual role performed, which delivered a statistically significant result ($H=48.73$; $p=0.000$). The effect size, by using the Z-value from

the Mann-Whitney test, calculated a practical significance of d=0.37 (technician and manager), d=0.24 (manager and strategist) and d=0.45 (technician and strategist) respectively. This thus indicates a significant difference between the various roles, especially between, on the one hand, the technician, and on the other hand, the managerial and strategist roles. Therefore, a cross-tabulation was done to investigate this trend further.

The following cross-tabulation supports this finding. This table shows that respondents in more senior positions, such as the manager and strategist, earned more than the respondents in junior positions.

Table 6.12: Percentage of respondents per role and income

Role	Income (%)						n
	R0 - R10 000	R10 001- R20 000	R20 001- R30 000	R30 001- R40 000	R40 001- R50 000	More than R50 000	
Technician	21.3	40.9	25.2	7.9	1.6	3.1	127
Manager	3.8	27.5	26.3	28.7	2.5	11.3	80
Strategist	2.9	14.7	20.6	17.6	20.6	23.5	34
TOTAL							**241**

When considering that a respondent had to grow into the managerial or strategic function, it would seem logical that monthly income correlated with the practitioners' number of years experience in corporate communication ($r=0.463$, $p<0.000$, $n=244$). Thus the longer the practitioners have worked in corporate communication and grown to perform the managerial or strategist roles that are considered to contribute more to organisational performance, the higher their monthly income.

6.4.4. Years Working for a Particular Organisation and Years Corporate Communication Experience

Table 6.13 shows that 37.7% (n=98) of the respondents have worked in their current organisation for less than two years, with 59.6% (n=155) working for a particular organisation for less than six years. Only 19.2% (n=50) of the respondents have worked for their current employer for more than ten years. This may indicate that corporate communication practitioners have been appointed over the last ten years into newly created posts. However, it could also indicate that practitioners were very mobile in their careers, opting to move to better positions or new challenges.

Table 6.13: Years working for current employer and years of corporate communication experience

Number of years	Years working for current employer		Years of corporate communication experience	
	%	n	%	n
0 – 2	37.7	98	18.8	48
3 – 5	21.9	57	19.2	49
6 – 10	21.2	55	26.7	68
More than 10 years	19.2	50	35.3	90
TOTAL	**100**	**260**	**100**	**255**

Most respondents, 62%, have more than five years corporate communication experience. It would also seem that the more years experience in corporate communication the respondents have, the longer they have worked for the specific organisation ($r=0.495$, $p<0.000$, $n=253$).

6.4.5. Type of Career Experience

Only 28.2% (n=74) of respondents had *only* corporate communication experience, while the rest of the respondents had experience outside corporate communication or experience in both corporate communication and other fields. Table 6.14 summarises the respondents' indication of all their experience outside corporate communication as asked in this multiple-response question.

Respondents mostly indicated having experience in the fields of human resources (17.2%, n=45), business management (16.4%, n=43), journalism (17.2%, n=41) and administration (17.3%, n=10). If experience outside corporate communication could be interpreted as a form of encroachment, one could argue that these findings negate the argument of strong journalistic encroachment as suggested by the interviewees (see section 5.2.2.1.2.). However, the findings could also be as a result of respondents merely selecting a career change.

Most respondents had between two and ten years experience outside corporate communication, while a few respondents indicated having more than 20 years experience in the areas of human resources (1.1%, n=3), business management and administration (both 0.8%, n=2), and journalism, as a company secretary, or in finance, marketing and education (all 0.4%, n=1, each).

Table 6.14: Experience outside corporate communication

Experience outside corporate communication	%				Total %	n
	< 2 years	2-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years		
None	28.2				28.2	74
Journalism	1.9	13.0	1.9	0.4	17.2	41
Business Management	2.3	9.5	3.8	0.8	16.4	43
Human Resources	2.3	9.2	4.6	1.1	17.2	45
Government	–	0.8	–	–	0.8	2
Company Secretary	–	0.4	–	0.4	0.8	2
Television and film	0.4	0.8	–	–	1.2	3
Project management	0.4	0.8	–	–	1.2	3
Publishing*	–	2.7	0.8	–	3.5	9
Research	–	1.2	–	–	1.2	3
Finance	–	3.1	0.8	0.4	4.3	11
Administration	–	15	1.5	0.8	17.3	10
Marketing**	–	8.0	0.8	0.4	9.2	24
Tourism	–	1.9	0.8	–	2.7	7
Education***	–	3.1	1.2	0.4	4.7	12
Law	0.4	0.4	–	–	0.8	2
Other****	–	3.4	–	–	3.4	9

* *Publishing includes editing, designing page layout and magazine work*
** *Marketing also includes advertising*
*** *Education includes lecturing, training, teaching, coaching and mentoring*
**** *Other includes business development, distribution, estate agent, import / export / retail, information technology, psychology, restaurant management and technical*

As seen above in section 6.4.4., 62% (n=158) of the respondents had more than five years corporate communication experience, while now indicating that only 28.2% (n=74) of respondents had *only* corporate communication experience. This indicates that some respondents had experience in more than one field.

The fact that most respondents had experience outside corporate communication, indicates that the field is still relatively new, and that some respondents have selected to move into the field from another discipline. This conclusion is supported by the data indicating that most respondents have non-corporate communication qualifications (see section 6.2.5.). This does not necessarily indicate encroachment, as suggested by various authors (Ehling, White & Grunig, 1992:359,363; Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2001:179-180; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600;

Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211; Lee, 2005:279; Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155), but rather a career change by the respondents, for the reasons mentioned in section 6.3.2.

Although a few correlations between the respondents' experience and other data were found, most were not statistically significant with an r-value of greater than 0.3. The single correlation that did report an r-value of greater than 0.3, was not practically significant.

The findings in the semi-structured interviews that stated that only experience within corporate communication in the strategic and relational paradigm is of value for the practitioner were not tested in this question.

6.4.6. Time Taken out of Their Careers

Respondents were asked whether they have taken time out of their careers, and if that was the case, to indicate the reasons from a list provided. They were also allowed to add reasons not listed and indicate the time they had taken out of their careers for those reasons. Respondents could select and indicate all the options pertaining to their career history.

Table 6.15: Reason for taking time out of their careers

Reason for taking time out of their careers	%				Total %	n
	< 2 years	2-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years		
No, I did not	68.3				68.3	179
To pursue another career	1.9	5.0	0.8	–	7.7	20
To travel	4.6	2.3	–	–	6.9	18
To raise a family	4.6	3.1	0.4	–	8.1	21
To study	1.9	0.4	–	–	2.3	6
Due to illness	0.4	–	–	–	0.4	1
Due to unemployment	0.4	0.4	–	–	0.8	2

More than two thirds of the practitioners (68.3%, n=179) did not take any time out of their career and none took more than 20 years time out of their careers.

Most respondents took time out of their careers for *family reasons* (8.1%, n=21), followed by *pursuing another career* (7.7%, n=20) and *travel* (6.9%, n=18). A few individuals did take time out for *study* (2.3%, n=6), *due to unemployment* (0.8%, n=2) and *due to illness* (0.4%,

n=1). The number of respondents that took time out for *family reasons* can be explained when considering the number of females in the profession.

Most respondents that did take time out for *other careers* (7.7%) and *travel* (6.9%), did so for less than two years. Those that took time out for *family reasons* (15.7%) did so for between two to ten years.

6.4.7. Mentorship

Almost a third of the respondents, 30% (n=78), reported that they did not have a mentor, while 70% (n=182) indicated that they did have a mentor in their work environment. Only 13.8% (n=36) of the respondents had a communication mentor with 25.8% (n=67) had a business mentor and 23.5% (n=61) had both a communication and a business mentor. Only 6.9% (n=18) had another work related mentor. This could show that the practice of mentorship is widely applied in the South African environment, which differs from the expectation described in literature (see section 3.5.4.). The finding however is in agreement with the interviewees' suggestion that mentorship is part of African culture and therefore applied in business, but not necessarily to the corporate communication profession.

Table 6.16: Mentorship

Mentorship	%	n
No mentor	30.0	78
A communication mentor	13.8	36
A general business mentor	25.8	67
Both a communication and general business mentor	23.5	61
Another work related mentor	6.9	18
TOTAL	**100**	**260**

6.4.8. Synopsis of Respondents' Career Experience

When analysing how the respondents' careers had progressed, it was found that most respondents had worked in their current organisation for fewer than six years and most respondents, 62% (n=158), indicated that they had more than five years corporate communication experience. Combining this information with the findings regarding the respondents' type of experience outside corporate communication, an argument could be put

forward that respondents had selected to move into the field from other disciplines or that corporate communication appointments were relatively new within the business environment.

Respondents usually had a non-corporate communication mentor. This could indicate a lack of corporate communication mentors, or merely the fact that respondents selected to have a non-corporate communication mentor. Interestingly however, 49.3% (n=128) of respondents had either a *business* or *communication and business* mentor. When taking into account the respondents' emphasis in the semi-structured interviews on the importance of business knowledge for practitioners in order to enable them to contribute to organisational performance, this finding becomes important. It could point to the fact that respondents intrinsically recognise the need for business knowledge and try to address this issue by finding a particular type of mentor.
The statement *taking time out of their careers* was not seen as posing serious challenges for these respondents.

The respondents have progressed in their careers to a point where they earn between R 10 001 and R 30 000 per month before tax, and have selected to be full time employees of their organisations. Their job titles, however, did not necessarily reflect their involvement with corporate communication or their job level appropriately.

Lastly, similar to the suggestion in literature and by the responses from the semi-structuree interviews, a vague definition of the function exists (see section 3.8.2.). This may be deduced from the large number of varying job titles used to describe the function.

6.5. RESPONDENTS' ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In order to describe the respondents' working environment, the organisation's annual communication budget, management type and characteristics, as well as the prominence given to the function will be discussed.

6.5.1. Annual Communication Budget

A third of the respondents, 33.4% (n=81), indicated that they did not know what their organisation's annual communication budget is. However, it is possible that this response could also have been provided by practitioners who did not want to make their organisation's

communication budgets known. Most respondents, however, did answer this question thus indicating that 33.3% (n=81) might really not know the answer or are too junior to have information on the budget.

Just over half the respondents (51.4%, n=125) indicated that their organisations' communication budget, was below R 10 million, and only 15.2% (n=37) had an organisational communication budget higher than R 10 million. It seems that the organisations' communication budgets tended to be under R 10 million, forcing the practitioner to be creative in the application of solutions.

Table 6.17: Annual communication budget

Annual communication budget	%	n
Don't know	33.3	81
R 0m – R 10m	51.4	125
Between R 10m and R 20m	5.3	13
R 20m – R 30m	2.9	7
Between R 30m and R 40m	3.3	8
R 40m – R 50m	1.2	3
Between R 50m and R 60m	–	–
More than R 60m	2.5	6
TOTAL	**100**	**243**

When investigating the differences between annual communication budget and the other descriptive data on the respondents, t-tests indicated that there are some statistically and practically significant differences between annual communication budgets and the type of research the organisation applies ($d=-1.09$, $t=-16.97$, $p<0.000$). Therefore, a cross-tabulation on the data was done to investigate this trend. It would seem that this table (see table 6.18) supports the finding that those organisations that use both informal and formal research also have higher annual communication budgets. This could be explained as organisations with higher communication budgets will probably do more research (especially formal research), because they have more money to pay for the research.

Table 6.18: Percentage per communication budget and research type

Communication budget	Research type (%)					TOTAL %	n
	No research at all	Don't know	Informal research (talking to people, field reports, reading newspapers/ internet)	Formal research (perception/ reputation/ image surveys, content analysis)	Both formal and informal research		
Don't know	7.5	12.5	21.3	7.5	51.2	100	80
R 0m – R 10m	10.5	1.6	27.4	11.3	49.2	100	124
Between R 10m and R 20m	–	–	15.4	7.7	76.9	100	13
R 20m – R 30m	–	–	–	–	100	100	7
Between R 30m and R 40m	–	–	–	25.0	75	100	8
R 40m – R 50m	–	–	33.3	–	66.7	100	3
Between R 50m and R 60m	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
More than R 60m	–	16.7	–	16.7	66.6	100	6
TOTAL							**241**

6.5.2. Prominence given to Corporate Communication

The prominence of the corporate communication function may be demonstrated by, amongst others, the focus on doing communication research.

A very small number of respondents (7.7%, n=20) indicated that their organisations did not do any communication research and 5% (n=13) indicated that they *did not know*. Almost a quarter, 22% (n=57), of the organisations conduct only informal research, which could be related to a lack of practitioner quantitative research skills or corporate communication budget constraints. However, 10.4% (n=27) of the organisations did conduct only formal research. It was positive to note that a total of 54.8% (n=142) of the respondents reported that their organisations conducted both formal and informal research.

Table 6.19: Type of corporate communication research conducted

Type of research done	%	n
No research at all	7.7	20
Don't know	5.0	13
Only informal research (talking to people, field reports, reading newspapers / internet)	22.0	57
Only formal research (perception / reputation / image surveys, content analysis)	10.4	27
Both formal and informal research	54.8	142
TOTAL	**100**	**259**

The focus of communication research is also important as this indicates whether the function is tested only on the technical or also on the strategic level.

Almost a fifth of organisations (18.5%, n=46) surveyed still only researched communication outputs which could indicate that communication is only seen as a technical function. However, 27.3% (n=68) have a different research focus, researching communication outcomes, indicating that in those cases the strategic contribution of communication is understood. More than half of the organisations, 54.2% (n=135), focused equally on both focuses for research, once again pointing to the credibility gained for the profession in understanding the communication contribution to the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:230, 319; Gupta, 2007:311; Taff, 2003:11). This finding is in contrast with the suggestion of Austin and Pinkleton (2001:7) and Woodall and Smith (2003:19-20) that practitioners only focus on the output measurements and thereby inhibit their own work.

Table 6.20: Focus of corporate communication research

Focus of research done	%	n
Only the number of articles and newsletters produced, amount of media coverage, number of people attending events, etc.	18.5	46
Only the changes in behaviour / perceptions / relationships	27.3	68
Focus equally on both the above	54.2	135
TOTAL	**100**	**249**

6.5.3. Organisation Management Type

Respondents were requested to evaluate each statement as true or false in order to determine whether they worked within an authoritative or participatory management environment.

Table 6.21: Organisation management type

Statement	%		N
	True	False	
a. In this organisation everyone / all departments work together to make the organisation effective	74.2	25.8	252
b. Managers in this organisation seem to believe that employees lack initiative and must constantly be given instructions	29.3	70.7	249
c. In this organisation most projects are done through teamwork	78.5	21.5	251
d. In this organisation senior managers believe in the sharing of power and responsibility	69.7	30.3	251
e. In this organisation the departments share a common mission	73.6	26.4	254
f. Decisions in this organisation are only made by top management	47.0	53.0	251

Statements a, c, d and e tested participatory management and statements b and f indicated an authoritative approach (ref. to Dozier *et al.*, 1995:139; see section 4.3.4.2.). The coding was, however, reversed in statements b and f in order to calculate management type. To test the reliability of these statements pertaining to management type, a Crönbach alpha coefficient was calculated for both participatory and authoritarian management types. The participatory management type achieved a Crönbach alpha of 0.673 for four statements, and the authoritative management type was 0.496 for two statements. These reliability scores were considered sufficient for the few statements included on the two management type concepts and indicate that this question was answered in a consistent manner.

It is interesting to note that for most of the statements the true – false division stayed more or less the same with a 70%/30% split in favour of participatory management. Only the last statement on top management decision-making was divided with 47% (n=118) of the respondents selecting true and 53% (n=133) selecting false, indicating that the top management may still have an authoritative function in many organisations.

6.5.4. Management Characteristics

Most practitioners (64.9%, N=251, n=163) had a male manager with only 35.1% (n=88) reporting to a female manager or director.

6.5.5. Synopsis of Respondents' Organisational Environment

It is encouraging to see that most participants worked in a participatory management environment, although it appeared that their top management did on occasion make authoritative decisions. According to literature a participatory management environment is conducive to corporate communication contributing to organisational performance (see section 2.2.3.2.).

It appears that corporate communication is given some importance in the organisation. Organisations were said to allocate between R 0 million and R 10 million to corporate communication budgets, with slightly more than half undertaking both formal and informal communication research, which seemed to be focused on both outputs and outcomes. It seems that there is some understanding of the contribution the function makes towards organisational performance.

Most respondents' reported to a male manager, however slightly more than a third reported to a female manager.

6.6. ROLES PERFORMED BY THE RESPONDENTS

As suggested in literature and by the respondents in the semi-structured interviews, the contribution of the corporate communication practitioner to organisational performance is closely linked to the role that they perform.

The role definitions of technician, manager and strategist, as determined by Steyn (2000b:33) were used (see section 2.2.4.2.). The statements determining the role that the respondents performed are discussed in this section and section 4.3.4.2.

In order to understand which roles the respondents' performed, it was necessary firstly to understand which tasks they performed and secondly to determine the time allocated to the

tasks performed. Whether respondents under or overestimated their role, was also determined. In addition the most important tasks completed by the respondents over the last three months were considered before determining the actual role performed by each individual.

6.6.1. Tasks Performed

Respondents were asked to select from a list of tasks all those that they had been involved with. The tasks listed by the respondents were used to:

1. Determine if the questionnaire were returned by the correct respondents – those responsible for corporate communications.
2. Determine which role(s) the respondents performed.

Table 6.22: Summary of the percentage of respondents who completed each task

Tasks	% of respondents that perform this task	n (N=262)
Technical tasks		
Organising special events, e.g. open houses / exhibitions / gala evenings	62.6	164
Writing articles for the organisation's publications	60.3	158
Editing corporate communication materials, e.g. speeches / annual reports	58.4	153
Keeping a media clipping service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)	54.2	142
Generating publicity, e.g. writing media releases	53.8	141
Producing audiovisual materials for presentations	50.8	133
Managerial tasks		
Managing the implementation of corporate communication plans	67.2	176
Developing corporate communication strategy that supports corporate strategy	56.9	149
Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication strategy	42.4	111
Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication plans	39.3	103
Monitoring the performance of corporate communication practitioners / sub-divisions	29.4	77

Tasks	% of respondents that perform this task	n (N=262)
Strategic tasks		
Acting as 'early warning system' to top management before issues erupt into crises	53.1	139
Reducing uncertainty in strategic decision-making by interpreting the external environment to top management	35.5	93
Explaining to top management the impact of their behaviour (obtained through research) on key external stakeholders (media, investors, communities)	30.9	81
Acting as advocate for key external stakeholders by explaining their views to top management	21.0	55
Initiating dialogue with pressure groups limiting the organisation's autonomy, e.g. environmentalists / consumer advocates / legislators	9.9	26
Research*	46.9	123

* *This task was not taken into consideration in determining the role performed*

As expected, the most practitioners enact technical tasks, followed by managerial tasks and lastly strategic tasks. The managerial tasks of *managing the implementation of corporate communication plans* scored the highest overall in terms of most of the practitioners fulfilling this task. The least number of respondents enacted the strategic task of *acting as advocate for key external stakeholders by explaining their views to top management*.

The respondents enacting the role of the strategist according to the tasks completed, positively correlated with the annual communication budget allocated to corporate communication ($r=0.326$, $p<0.000$, $n=243$). Thereby indicating that the more strategically the practitioner acts within the organisation, the higher their corporate communication budget would be.

The reliability for the tasks relating to the technician role was $\alpha=0.79$, for the managerial role $\alpha=0.80$ and for the strategist role $\alpha=0.73$. The following tables summarise the reliability of each of the roles separately:

Table 6.23: Reliability for the technician role tasks completed

Tasks		Crönbach alpha (N=262)	Crönbach alpha if item deleted
a.	Writing articles for the organisation's publications	0.79	0.75
e.	Editing corporate communication materials, e.g. speeches / annual reports		0.75
i.	Generating publicity, e.g. writing media releases		0.75
k.	Producing audiovisual materials for presentations		0.77
n.	Organising special events, e.g. open houses / exhibitions / gala evenings		0.78
p.	Keeping a media clipping service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)		0.75

Table 6.24: Reliability for the managerial role tasks completed

Tasks		Crönbach alpha (N=262)	Crönbach alpha if item deleted
b.	Managing the implementation of corporate communication plans	0.80	0.76
d.	Monitoring the performance of corporate communication practitioners / sub-divisions		0.80
g.	Developing corporate communication strategy that supports corporate strategy		0.76
j.	Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication strategy		0.73
m.	Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication plans		0.76

Table 6.25: Reliability for the strategist role tasks completed

Tasks		Crönbach alpha (N=262)	Crönbach alpha if item deleted
c.	Reducing uncertainty in strategic decision-making by interpreting the external environment to top management	0.73	0.63
f.	Explaining to top management the impact of their behaviour (obtained through research) on key external stakeholders (media, investors, communities)		0.70
h.	Acting as 'early warning system' to top management before issues erupt into crises		0.68
l.	Initiating dialogue with pressure groups limiting the organisation's autonomy, e.g. environmentalists / consumer advocates / legislators		0.71
o.	Acting as advocate for key external stakeholders by explaining their views to top management		0.71

In order to also re-test for the constructs of the technician, manager and strategist roles, exploratory factor analysis, Varimax rotated with Kaiser Normalisation, was conducted. This finding confirmed that the questions factored into the three roles as suggested by Steyn (2000b:33; 2000c:33-34) and Everett (2006:79-103).

Table 6.26: Exploratory factor analysis: re-testing the role conceptualisation as per the respondent tasks

Question	Role		
	Technician	Manager	Strategist
V27a	.723	–	–
V27b	–	.674	–
V27c	–	–	.706
V27d	–	.613	–
V27e	.635	–	–
V27f	–	–	.468
V27g	–	.689	–
V27h	–	–	.628
V27i	.682	–	–
V27j	–	.745	–
V27k	.597	–	–

Question	Role		
	Technician	Manager	Strategist
V27l	–	–	.663
V27m	–	.681	–
V27n	.601	–	–
V27o	–	–	.749
V27p	.738	–	

According to the tasks indicated by the respondents, they were *preliminarily* categorised into the three roles. If a respondent completed mostly tasks within one role, that role was allocated to the respondent. However, if the respondent completed an equal number of tasks within two roles, or even all three roles, it was indicated as such. Table 6.27 summarises the findings.

Table 6.27: *Preliminary* role categorisation of respondents according to tasks completed

Role	%	n
Technician	52.2	128
Manager	24.1	59
Strategist	9.8	24
Technician and manager	5.7	14
Manager and strategist	4.5	11
Technician, manager and strategist	3.7	9
TOTAL	**100.0**	**245**

From the above it is clear that most practitioners perform the technical role and the fewest respondents the strategist role. It is, however, important to notice that 13.9% (n=34) of the respondents were categorised into two roles simultaneously – 5.7% (n=14) conducted the technician and managerial roles, 4.5% (n=11) the managerial and strategist roles and 3.7% (n=9) were found to conduct the technical, managerial and strategist roles equally, as was alluded to by Bassett (1996:38) and Moss *et al.* (2000:292, 300). There are thus instances where practitioners perform two or three roles with equal importance in terms of the number of tasks performed.

6.6.2. Time Allocated to Tasks

Although in Steyn's (2000b:1-43) and Everett's (2006:1-167) research the respondents only indicated the tasks they perform, it was deemed necessary to also include the time that respondents allocated to these tasks, as alluded to by Le Roux (2004:32-33).

In a subsequent question each respondent was asked to indicate the percentage of their time spent on each of the activities they were involved in. The aim of this question was to understand how much of the respondent's time was actually spent performing each of the tasks, in order to verify the initial role categorisation which was based only on the tasks performed.

The following table summarises the average *percentages of time* spent for each task overall, as indicated by the respondents (all the percentages as indicated by the respondents for each task, were divided by the number of respondents that indicated each particular option).

Table 6.28: Summary of the percentage of time allocated to each task

Tasks	Average percentage of time spent on each task as indicated by the respondents	n (N=262)
Technical tasks	***67.1***	
Organising special events, e.g. open houses / exhibitions / gala evenings	16.2	164
Writing articles for the organisation's publications	13.4	158
Editing corporate communication materials, e.g. speeches / annual reports	10.6	153
Keeping a media clipping service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)	7.3	142
Generating publicity, e.g. write media releases	11.4	141
Producing audiovisual materials for presentations	8.2	133

Tasks	Average percentage of time spent on each task as indicated by the respondents	n (N=262)
Managerial tasks	***47.0***	
Managing the implementation of corporate communication plans	13.2	176
Developing corporate communication strategy that supports corporate strategy	11.0	149
Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication strategy	7.7	111
Being in charge of the success/failure of corporate communication plans	7.8	103
Monitoring the performance of corporate communication practitioners / sub-divisions	7.2	77
Strategic tasks	***38.6***	
Acting as 'early warning system' to top management before issues erupt into crises	7.9	139
Reducing uncertainty in strategic decision-making by interpreting the external environment to top management	7.9	93
Explaining to top management the impact of their behaviour (obtained through research) on key external stakeholders (media, investors, communities)	6.3	81
Acting as advocate for key external stakeholders by explaining their views to top management	6.5	55
Initiating dialogue with pressure groups limiting the organisation's autonomy, e.g. environmentalists / consumer advocates / legislators	3.2	26
Research*	6.8	123

* *For purposes of determining role this task was not included.*

In general, it seems that most time spent was on the technical role, followed by the managerial and then strategic roles. *Organising special events* was the single task most time was devoted to, followed by the managerial task of *managing the implementation of corporate communication plans*, and then the technical task of *writing articles for the organisation's publications* follows. The task the least time was spent on was *initiating dialogue with pressure groups*.

According to the time spent on the tasks constituting each role as indicated by the respondents, a second *preliminary* categorisation into the various roles was completed. If a

respondent spent most of his/her time within one role, that role was assigned to the respondent. However if the respondent spent an equal percentage of time on tasks within two roles, or even all three roles, this was indicated. Table 6.29 summarises the findings.

Table 6.29: *Preliminary* role categorisation of respondents according to the percentage of time spent in each role

Role	%	n
Technician	52.2	128
Manager	24.1	59
Strategist	9.8	24
Technician and manager	5.7	14
Manager and strategist	4.5	11
Technician, manager and strategist	3.7	9
TOTAL	**100**	**245**

Similarly to the findings that only considered the tasks performed by the respondents (see section 6.6.1. above), most respondents performed the technician role, followed by the managerial and then the strategist roles. Fewer respondents than mentioned above in section 6.6.1., were found to occupy two or more roles simultaneously.

6.6.3. Over- or Underestimation of the Role Performed

When comparing each individual respondent's role categorisation according to the *tasks the repsondents indicated they completed*, and their role categorisation according to the *time spent on each task*, it could be determined whether respondents over- or underestimated their role. When respondents were categorised in a higher role category according to the *tasks they indicated that they performed*, compared to their role categorisation according to the *time spent on each task*, they would be considered as overestimating their role. The reversed situation would indicate role underestimation.

Table 6.30 summarises the findings.

Table 6.30: Over- or underestimation of role performed

	%	n
Respondents overestimate their role	18.0	37
Role indicated and actual is the same	68.9	142
Respondents underestimate their role	13.1	27
TOTAL	**100**	**206**

It was found that for most respondents (68.9%, n=142) their roles as determined above (in sections 6.6.1. and 6.6.2.) were similar. Therefore they did not over- or underestimate their role. However 18% (n=37) of the respondents overestimated their role and 13.1% (n=27) underestimated their role. In both these cases where the role is over or underestimated, the respondents found it difficult to manage expectations pertaining to their role and function (ref. Steyn, 2000c:40-41; see sections 3.4.3.2. and 3.5.1.).

6.6.4. Most Important Tasks Performed in the Last Three Months

In an open question, respondents were required to list, in order of importance, the most important five tasks performed over the last three months. The tasks were categorised, then their priority was determined by calculating how many respondents reported performing the task and the order in which the tasks were reported.

Table 6.31: Most important tasks completed in the past three months

Rank order	Task
1	Technical writing: includes writing articles, the annual report, reports, presentations, press releases and editing.
2	Employee communication: includes any internal communication
3	Event planning: includes networking lunches, breakfasts and events
4	Communication management: creating, implementing and managing plans and budgets, management of teams
5	Crisis management
6	General business tasks: pitching for new business, obtaining financial targets, FICA policies, tendering
7	Website creation, updating and planning
8	Creating of newsletters, any printed material, magazines and fliers for internal and external stakeholders

Rank order	Task
9	Financial communication: writing, publishing and contacting shareholders, investors, including financial reports, interim results.
10	Research including customer research, identity research and internal research
11	Communication strategy development
12	Administration
13	Marketing: including customer relations, branding and advertising
14	Sponsorships
15	Corporate social investment strategy or projects
16	Media relations, liaison, monitoring, keeping a clipping service
17	Human Resource tasks: payroll duties, employing people, recruitment, salary negotiations
18	Industrial relations
19	Corporate identity

The findings of the tasks completed in the last three months correspond with the findings regarding the roles performed by the respondents, in that most attention was given to more technical tasks. However communication planning, as a managerial function, was also highly ranked.

6.6.5. *Actual* Role Performed by Respondents

In order to then determine the *actual* role performed by the respondents, the tasks that each respondent performed (section 6.6.1.; question 27), the time allocated to each task (section 6.6.2.; question 28) and the most important tasks completed in the past three months (section 6.6.4.; question 29) were all taken into account.

The *actual* role performed by the respondent was then determined as follows:

- Where analysis of question 27 and 28 proved the practitioner performed the same role, that particular role was recorded as the respondent's actual role performed.
- In the cases where question 27 and 28 did not yield the same role, question 29 was evaluated in order to determine the actual role performed by the respondent.

Table 6.32 summarises the findings of the *actual* roles performed by respondents.

Table 6.32: *Actual* role performed by the respondents

Role	%	n
Technician	52.2	132
Manager	33.2	84
Strategist	14.6	37
TOTAL	**100**	**253**

As could be expected, just over half the respondents (n=132) were found to be technicians, with a third acting as managers and 14.6% (n=84) acting as strategists.

The respondents' actual role positively correlates with the respondents' monthly income ($r=0.451$, $p<0.000$, $n=216$), indicating that managers and then strategists received a higher income, as they performed a more senior role.

Table 6.33, indicates that respondents who performed a technician role most possibly held the title of communication practitioners, officers or specialists or communication task-specific titles, although some also held titles referring to the managerial level. Most strategists, interestingly, held human resource related titles. Corporate communication managers held the title of communication practitioners, officers or specialists or communication task-specific titles; as well as titles referring to the managerial level, consultation services, marketing and human resources. Thus it is clear that even between roles there is no specific title convention, which once again could indicate the confusion of expectations for the corporate communication practitioner within the various roles.

Table 6.33: Titles relating to the actual role performed by the respondents

Titles	%		
	Technician	Manager	Strategist
Communication practitioners / officers / specialists / communication task specific titles (not managerial level)	35.0	19.4	3.1
Administrative titles	6.0	–	–
Communication practitioners on the managerial level	21.4	14.9	12.5
Titles associated with being responsible for a client account, thus providing consultation services	8.5	16.4	12.5
Titles referring to the top manager in the company on board level	1.7	3.0	6.3
Titles referring to specifically corporate or public affairs	1.7	3.0	–
Marketing function related titles	11.1	14.9	3.1
Human resources function related titles	6.8	13.4	46.9
Finance function related titles	–	–	9.4
Combined marketing and communication function titles	3.4	7.5	–
General management function titles	2.6	7.5	6.3
Combined marketing and human resources function titles	1.7	–	–
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	**100**
n (N=216)	117	67	32

6.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the results found by means of quantitative data gathering about the respondents' demographics, experience of the corporate communication function and their career, and the organisational environment in which they work. The findings were evaluated against the background provided by literature, as well as from the semi-structured interview results, where applicable.

The respondents could be described as white females between 25 to 50 years, fluent in English and mostly, at least, bilingual. Respondents seemed to have postmatric qualifications, but not necessarily in corporate communication. Respondents had a fairly

balanced Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldview, and viewed personal credibility as the most important characteristics that practitioners should display.

When discussing their experience of the function, respondents were to some extent, although much less than suggested in literature, still confronted with the problem of the vague definition of the function, as suggested by the findings regarding the titles used for the practitioners in the function. Their job titles did not necessarily reflect their involvement with corporate communication or their job level appropriately. Furthermore, most respondents did not belong to a professional body from whence they could get more information on the function. This was mainly for reasons of lack of perceived value in professional body membership.

The respondents' career experience showed that most respondents' had worked in their current organisation for under six years and had more than five years corporate communication experience. The organisational environment in which the respondents worked was usually a participatory management environment.

Overall it would seem that there is some understanding of the contribution of the function towards organisational performance, as more than half of the respondents indicated that both formal and informal communication research was conducted in their organisation, and that this research seemed to be focused on both outputs and outcomes. Organisations that used formal research or both informal and formal research, also reported higher annual communication budgets.

Lastly the role performed by the respondents according to the tasks they complete, and the amount of time allocated to each task were also considered. It was found that when considering both aspects there were respondents who performed more than one role simultaneously (in some cases even all three roles). However when considering the actual final role performed by the respondents, most enacted the technical role, with some performing a managerial role and the fewest a strategist role. Monthly income was found to increase as the respondents gravitated towards functioning in a strategist role.

The next chapter will analyse the perceptions of these respondents regarding the influences on their contribution to organisational performance.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA RESULTS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRACTITIONERS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the data describing the respondents were discussed. This included demographic information, the respondents' experience of the profession, their career and organisational environment, and a description of the roles they perform. The results were compared to literature and the findings of the semi-structured interviews.

The next step was to discuss the respondents' perceptions of variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance. This chapter focuses on reporting the mentioned quantitative data, comparing it with the semi-structured interviews and literature findings. This includes a discussion of the basic descriptive statistical findings, reliability of the statements testing each level of variables, factor analysis of each level of variables, and a discussion of the participants' perceptions of the variables that influence practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. This information provides insight into the world of corporate communication practitioners in South Africa, and answers Specific research questions two and four:

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

The chapter starts with a discussion on the results of exploratory factor analysis on the five levels of variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. References to literature and the semi-structured interviews are made were applicable.

7.2. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

A number of low reliability scores were obtained from initial analysis of the constructs within the different levels of variables, categorised according to the findings of the literature study (see sections 3.9. and 4.3.4.8.) The reliability scores for each level of variables were, however, satisfactory. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the reliability scores for the levels and constructs as identified in literature and the semi-structured interviews.

Table 7.1: Reliability scores for variables identified in literature and the semi-structured interviews

Level	Level reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Constructs	Construct reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Concepts

Individual	0.72	Practitioner characteristics	0.36	• Age
				  ○ Time in organisation
				  ○ Time in public relations
				• Race
				  ○ Affirmative action
				  ○ Acting as a cultural intermediary
				• Gender and sexual orientation
				• Multilingualism
				• Stereotyping
				• Personality
				• Practitioner worldview

		Practitioner history	0.78	• Education and skills
				  ○ Level of education in corporate communication
				  ○ International knowledge of corporate communication
				  ○ Being able to enact the mixed motive model
				• Experience
				• Networking

		Career management	0.49	• Career goals
				  ○ Practitioner view of corporate communication
				  ○ Role enactment
				• Making clear transitions from positions
				• Taking time out of career
				• Managing workloads

Level	Level reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Constructs	Construct reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Concepts
Organisational	0.65	Shared expectations	0.21	Shared expectations
		Organisational characteristics	0.49	• Organisation size and structure • Organisation culture • Organisational politics • Structure and size of the public relations function • The organisation's unique stakeholder environment

		Management influences	0.34	• Management view of the role and support for communication in the organisation
				• Access to management
				• Encroachment and pigeonholing
				• Management tolerance of diversity
				• Management characteristics
				  ○ Being more qualified than management
				  ○ Having a higher educational qualification than their direct manager
				  ○ Younger management better understanding the need for communication
				  ○ Having a male or female direct manager
				  ○ Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner

		Mentorship	–*	Mentorship and internship
		Job satisfaction	0.47	• Advancement opportunities • Remuneration and benefits • Flexible hours • Lack of the *glass ceiling* • Recognition
Industry	0.66	History	0.63	Historic role of public relations in the industry
		Industry environment	–*	• Industry-specific regulations, such as BEE charters, policies, regulations and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders, such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists

** Only one statement tested this construct and therefore reliability could not be calculated.*

Level	Level reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Constructs	Construct reliability score (Crönbach alpha)	Concepts
Country	0.53	• Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Cultural system • Level of development • Media system	0.53	• Crime • Corruption • Activist publics • BEE • Experience working in the South African environment • Literacy levels • Cultural sensitivity • Media legislation • Connectedness • Job security • Social responsibility
Professional	0.52	Professional legacy	0.65	Professional legacy
		Lack of a clear definition	–*	Lack of a clear definition
		Lack of a body of knowledge	–*	Lack of a body of knowledge
		Showing the importance of communication	0.20	• Advocating, educating and defending the profession • Doing public relations research • Being visible in the organisation • Being proactive
		Role of professional bodies	0.72	• Membership • Enhancing recognition for the function • Setting standards of education and skills sets • Accreditation of the function • Professionalisation of the function • Enforcing ethical practice

** Only one statement tested this construct and therefore reliability could not be calculated.*

The less than satisfactory reliability scores in some instances indicated that further statistical analysis on the categorisation of the statements was needed to explore how respondents grouped these statements. This resulted in various rounds of factor analysis.

The first round of exploratory factor analysis targeted the complete set of statements – all the statements pertaining to all five levels (individual, organisational, industry, country and professional) of variables. The goal was to identify how respondents grouped the statements

in evaluating the variables that influence their contribution to organisational performance. In this exploratory factor analysis, two important findings were made:

- First, the exploratory factor analysis resulted in 36 factors for question 30, (explaining 71% of the variance) and 45 factors for question 33, (explaining 61% of the variance). This large number of identified factors however, proved not to be logically and practically usable.
- Second, the exploratory factor analysis indicated that the statements could not be clearly categorised into the five levels of variables. This confirmed the semi-structured interview findings (see section 5.2.1.5.), which suggested that practitioners did not view the variables in distinct levels, or categories, as derived from literature (see chapter three), but rather as one whole entity.

Notwithstanding the above, the factor analysis did not find an alternative categorisation of variables to the five categories found in literature. It was therefore decided to retain the five levels of variables as identified in literature, for ease of reference and clarity in reporting the research results, as their reliability scores proved satisfactory (see table 7.1).

In the second round of factor analysis, the statements grouped within each level were tested per level, in order to determine if respondents grouped the statements within each level in a similar way as suggested by literature. The results suggested a number of new constructs per level. The factor analysis results, and associated new constructs, are discussed in each of the sections below, which deal with the different levels of variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance (see sections 7.3.1., 7.4.1., 7.5.1., 7.6.1. and 7.7.1.).

In summary then, the reliability analysis proved consistent responses within each level or category of variables. The factor analysis showed that respondents did not group the statements according to the constructs as suggested in literature, and indicated new constructs per level or category of influence.

This finding also supports the argument made in section 3.2. that many researchers had investigated variables influencing the practitioner. However, no researcher has tried yet to encapsulate all the variables into one study, and categorise them comprehensively. Therefore literature does not provide a statistically verified list or categorisation of the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

The responses of respondents to statements testing the variables within each level of influence will now be discussed according to the new constructs, as identified in the exploratory factor analysis.

7.3. PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

The statistical calculations for the individual-level variables will be discussed below, followed by the respondents' perceptions of these individual-level variables and their influence on their ability to contribute to organisational performance. References to literature are made where relevant.

7.3.1. Individual-level Variables: Factor Analysis

As explained in section 7.2. exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the statements within each level of variables. The factor analysis produced 12 factors for the individual-level by Varimax rotated factor analysis (see Addendum F), which explains 71.77% of the variance. The communality estimates all proved above 0.3, which shows that each statement contributes sufficiently to the individual-level variables.

From the aforementioned factor analysis it is clear that the respondents did not categorise the statements pertaining to individual-level variables, into the same constructs as identified in literature. Therefore the new factors were identified and labelled as shown in table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Individual-level: Labels for new factors

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
33.8	The practitioner having general writing skills	1	Having the right skill set
33.12	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the corporate communication arena	1	
33.13	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the general business arena	1	
33.5	The practitioner having good networking skills	1	
33.11	The practitioner having conflict management skills (ability to disagree constructively)	1	
33.10	The practitioner having good listening skills	1	
33.9	The practitioner having verbal communication skills, presentation / speaking skills	1	
33.6	The practitioner having clear career goals	1	
33.4	The practitioner being able to apply knowledge gained to the situation at hand	1	
33.7	The practitioner being computer literate	1	
33.3	The practitioner having strategic communication knowledge	1	
33.47	The practitioner viewing corporate communication as a strategic function	2	Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function
33.40	The practitioner viewing corporate communication as important	2	
33.1	The practitioner having business knowledge	2	
33.33	The practitioner taking an active role in the business	2	
33.50	The practitioner identifying new opportunities for communication	2	
33.34	The practitioner not being stereotyped according to race	3	Importance of a stereotype free environment
33.35	The practitioner not being stereotyped according to gender	3	

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
33.28	The practitioner having a particular cultural background	4	Cultural advocate for stakeholders
33.29	The practitioner being able to act as an cultural interpreter within the organisation and between the organisation and its stakeholders	4	
33.23	The practitioner acting as an advisor / early warning system to management	4	
33.24	The practitioner acting as an advocate on behalf of stakeholders	4	
33.46	The practitioner viewing corporate communication only as a technical function	5	Viewing corporate communication as a technical function
33.2	The practitioner having basic communication theory knowledge	5	
30.3	Stereotyping on the basis of gender exists in the communication profession	6	Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession
30.4	Stereotyping on the basis of race exists in the communication profession	6	
30.5	In many cases who you know, determines whether you can make a contribution to the organisation	6	
30.40	Older practitioners (45+) can contribute more to the organisation's performance than younger practitioners	7	Personal characteristics as constraints
30.2	Homosexual people tend to be better corporate communication practitioners than heterosexual people	7	
30.34	In this organisation affirmative action has lead to management expecting less from corporate communication practitioners	7	
30.1	The salaries of corporate communication practitioners are low because there are so many women in the profession	8	Feminisation
30.11	I have experienced sexual harassment in my communication career	8	
30.27	In my career affirmative action appointments limited me to get positions / to advance to positions for which I was qualified and experienced enough to do	9	View on job limitations
30.12	I experience tension between the creative / technical and management side of my job	9	

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
30.19	Practitioners with international experience can contribute more to organisational performance than those who do not have international experience	10	International experience
33.37	Practitioners being multilingual	11	Multilingualism
30.33	When promoted to a higher and/or management position, I focused completely on the new position and did not have to perform any of the previous position's tasks	12	Clear transition to a new position

To test the reliability of the new constructs, the Crönbach alpha for each construct was calculated. Table 7.3. summarises the results.

Table 7.3: Individual-level: New constructs

Construct	Crönbach alpha reliability score	Crönbach alpha reliability score if statement would be deleted
Having the right skill set	0.871	No increase with any deletions
Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function	0.720	No increase with any deletions
Importance of a stereotype free environment	0.965	No increase with any deletions
Cultural advocate for stakeholders	0.670	No increase with any deletions
Viewing corporate communication as a technical function	0.080	Only two statements were used
Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession	0*	The reliability score would increase with the omission of any of the three statements
Personal characteristics as constraints	0*	The reliability score would increase with the omission of any of the three statements
Feminisation	0.437	No increase with any deletions
View on job limitations	0.453	No increase with any deletions
International experience	–	Only one statement, therefore reliability could not be calculated
Multilingualism	–	Only one statement, therefore reliability could not be calculated
Clear transition to a new position	–	Only one statement, therefore reliability could not be calculated

**The Crönbach alpha result obtained for these constructs were small negative values (-0.178 and -0.289 respectively) even when the coding was reversed. Therefore the assumption can be made that there is no reliability for these two constructs, and the Crönbach alpha can be shown as 0.*

Most of the reliability scores proved that sufficient reliability levels were obtained. The reliability scores for three cases could not be calculated, as more than one statement and preferably more than three statements, are necessary for this calculation. In one other case (viewing corporate communication as a technical function) the Crönbach alpha was less than 0.3. In such cases where only a few items make up a construct, it is argued that a *low* Crönbach alpha (such as 0.2) could even be considered to be sufficient (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2002:500) as the number of statements included in the calculation can influence the calculated score.

In two cases – *existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession* and *personal characteristics as constraints* – three statements were used to determine the Crönbach alpha and delivered a reliability score of 0, indicating no reliability for these two constructs. However, any other categorisation of statements into constructs overall for the individual-level, delivered less reliable results. Therefore the constructs were kept as reported.

7.3.2. Individual-level Variables: Respondents' Perceptions

Respondent perceptions will be discussed according to the new constructs as identified in the factor analysis. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements, or viewed a particular aspect as important for the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

7.3.2.1. Having the right skills set

The respondents were asked to rate the following statements regarding practitioner education and skills, in terms of importance in influencing the practitioner to contribute to organisational performance.

Table 7.4: Having the right skills set

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
3. The practitioner having strategic communication knowledge	64.4	30.0	5.3	–	0.4	–	247	4.58
4. The practitioner being able to apply knowledge gained to the situation at hand	67.9	27.7	3.6	–	0.4	0.4	249	4.63
7. The practitioner being computer literate	65.1	29.3	4.4	0.4	0.8	–	249	4.57
8. The practitioner having general writing skills	70.9	24.3	4.0	–	0.4	0.4	247	4.66
9. The practitioner having verbal communication skills, presentation / speaking skills	75.3	23.1	1.2	–	0.4	–	247	4.73
10. The practitioner having good listening skills	77.7	20.6	1.2	–	0.4	–	247	4.75
11. The practitioner having conflict management skills (ability to disagree constructively)	51.0	42.6	6.0	–	0.4	–	249	4.44
12. The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the corporate communication arena	53.6	39.2	6.4	0.4	0.4	–	250	4.45
13. The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the general business arena	44.4	45.6	9.2	0.4	0.4	–	250	4.33
5. The practitioner having good networking skills	56.5	36.7	6.0	0.4	0.4	–	248	4.48
6. The practitioner having clear career goals	32.3	39.1	24.2	3.2	0.8	0.4	248	3.99

Respondents felt strongly that the skills mentioned were *very important* and *important* to the practitioner. In all the cases *somewhat important*, *unimportant* and *not important at all*, were rated very low. *The practitioner having clear career goals* was the only statement rated slightly lower and with a contingent of 24.2% of respondents rating it as only *somewhat important*.

Combining the *very important* and *important* categories, the importance of these items can be rank ordered as set out in table 7.5:

Table 7.5: Rank order of skills set

Order	Skills	%
1.	The practitioner having verbal communication skills, presentation / speaking skills	98.4
2.	The practitioner having good listening skills	98.3
3.	The practitioner being able to apply knowledge gained to the situation at hand	95.6
4.	The practitioner having general writing skills	95.2
5.	The practitioner having strategic communication knowledge	94.4
6.	The practitioner being computer literate	94.4
7.	The practitioner having conflict management skills (ability to disagree constructively)	93.6
8.	The practitioner having good networking skills	93.2
9.	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the corporate communication arena	92.8
10.	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the general business arena	90.0
11.	The practitioner having clear career goals	71.4

When considering the mean scores for these statements, it is reassuring to note that practitioners rated the mentioned skills, specifically both technical and strategic knowledge of the function, very highly (the highest possible score being 5). In literature it was argued that in South Africa and globally, practitioners often lack sufficient managerial-, strategic- and business education, knowledge of overseas practices or international best practices (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4), as well as the necessary technology skills (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Kruckeberg, 2000b:145).

The ratings by the respondents of the importance of skills however, give the impression that practitioners might be aware of which skills would assist them in contributing to organisational performance.

7.3.2.2. Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function

Respondents rated the following statements dealing with corporate communication as a strategic function, as follows:

Table 7.6: Importance of viewing corporate communication as a strategic function

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
1. The practitioner having business knowledge	67.7	27.0	4.8	0.4	–	–	248	4.62
40. The practitioner viewing corporate communication as important	62.7	34.4	2.9	–	–	6.0	244	4.60
47. The practitioner viewing corporate communication as a strategic function	52.0	37.1	7.7	2.8	0.4	–	248	4.38
33. The practitioner taking an active role in the business	34.0	49.2	14.8	1.2	0.4	0.4	250	4.16
50. The practitioner identifying new opportunities for communication	59.1	34.4	6.1	0.4	–	–	247	4.52

All the above statements were rated *important* and *very important* by the majority of respondents. When considering the mean scores, *having business knowledge* was viewed as most *important*, followed closely by *the practitioner viewing corporate communication as important*. *The practitioner taking an active role in the business* obtained the lowest mean score, although more than 90% of respondents regarded it as *important*.

Combined with the respondents' perceptions discussed above in section 7.3.2.1., it is apparent that respondents seem to intuitively understand what would positively influence their contribution to organisational performance. They specifically seem to be aware of the need for corporate communication to be proactive and strategic. This coincides with the Excellence Study suggestions that corporate communication has to be practiced at all levels, including the strategic level, in order to be excellent and contribute most to organisational performance (Grunig, 2001:6, 8; Grunig, in Steyn, 2000c:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17). This is

specifically true for the volatile South Africa environment, where there is a great need for the strategic view and practice of the function (De Beer, 2001:2).

Bütschi and Steyn (2006:106-109) suggest that practicing strategic communication will help the practitioner to get a seat at the boardroom table. Therefore, one could also argue that these findings could point to the respondents' drive to obtain a seat at the boardroom table and be included in the decision-making process within the organisation.

The high rating for the need for business knowledge was also reflected in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.3.). This supports the need for a practitioner to have some business background or education, such as a B.Com degree (see section 3.4.2.1.).

7.3.2.3. Importance of a stereotype free environment

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statements regarding stereotyping, in terms of practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

Table 7.7: Importance of a stereotype free environment

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
34. The practitioner not being stereotyped according to race	50.0	37.2	8.0	2.4	1.6	0.8	250	4.33
35. The practitioner not being stereotyped according to gender	51.2	37.1	7.7	1.2	2.0	0.8	248	4.35

Respondents clearly indicated the importance of *not being stereotyped in terms of race or gender* for practitioners to contribute to organisational performance. Almost half of the respondents rated not being stereotyped (both according to race and gender) as *very important* and almost 40% rated it as *important*. Very few respondents rated it as *somewhat important* or *less important*.

Since such a large number of practitioners agreed on this issue, it would seem that respondents feel strongly that practitioners should not be stereotyped, as this may negatively impact on their contribution to organisational performance.

This finding correlates with literature suggesting that stereotyping has hurt the profession (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:23, 26). Specifically in South Africa many black practitioners have been appointed to high-level corporate communication positions as a window dressing affirmative action exercise which led to practitioners being stereotyped according to race (see section 3.4.1.2).

7.3.2.4. Cultural advocate for stakeholders

Respondents rated the following statements on the importance of being a cultural advocate for stakeholders, as follows:

Table 7.8: Importance of being a cultural advocate for stakeholders

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
28. The practitioner having a particular cultural background	6.5	8.5	21.8	45.6	14.5	3.2	248	2.45
29. The practitioner being able to act as an cultural interpreter within the organisation and between the organisation and its stakeholders	10.9	24.2	45.6	12.9	3.2	3.2	248	3.28
23. The practitioner acting as an advisor / early warning system to management	39.9	44.8	14.1	0.4	–	0.8	248	4.25
24. The practitioner acting as an advocate on behalf of stakeholders	22.4	37.4	30.9	5.7	0.8	2.8	246	3.77

Most respondents indicated having a particular cultural background as either being only *somewhat important*, *unimportant* or *not important at all* (81.9% in total). Therefore, one can argue that cultural background is not seen as an important positive influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Almost half the respondents (45.6%) rated *acting as a cultural interpreter for the organisation* as *somewhat important*, while only 35.1% viewed it as *important* or *very important*. This could indicate that some respondents understand the importance of acting as a cultural interpreter, while others do not see the necessity for this role. One could also speculate that respondents argued that people living within a multicultural environment should already be culturally sensitive and therefore, the role of cultural interpreter is not that important.

Most respondents see it as *very important* (39.9%) and *important* (44.8%) for the practitioner to *act as an early warning system to management*. This could indicate that practitioners understand the proactive advisory and early warning role, and therefore, realise the importance of playing a strategic role in the organisation.

Many respondents rated acting on behalf of stakeholders (30.9%) as *somewhat important*, although 59.8% did view it as *very important* or *important*. Thus it would seem that respondents realise the importance of understanding stakeholders, but are still hesitant to act as an activist for stakeholders in the organisation. They may also find it hard to balance the interests of the organisation and the stakeholders. Although it was seen to be *important*, *acting as an advocate on behalf of stakeholders* was seen as less important than *acting as an advisor or early warning system to management*.

Respondents therefore seem to understand and value their advisory / early warning system role better than the value of *advocating on behalf of stakeholders* or *acting as a cultural interpreter*, for contributing to organisational performance. However, respondents' ratings will have been influenced by their level of education, their role currently performed, as well as their understanding of what corporate communication encompasses.

7.3.2.5. Viewing corporate communication as a technical function

The following statements prompted respondents regarding the importance of viewing corporate communication as a technical function, in order to contribute to organisational performance.

Table 7.9: Importance of viewing corporate communication as a technical function

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
2. The practitioner having basic communication theory knowledge	58.7	32.0	8.1	0.4	0.8	–	247	4.47
46. The practitioner viewing corporate communication only as a technical function	7.9	12.4	16.9	27.3	22.7	12.8	242	3.51

Having basic communication theory knowledge was considered *very important* by 58.7% of respondents and *important* by 32% of respondents. This type of knowledge is thus expected of the practitioner and respondents felt that it would enhance their ability to contribute to organisational performance.

Fifty percent of the respondents rated *viewing the corporate communication function as only technical* as not important for the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. It should be borne in mind that statements rated as *important* indicate the aspects that respondents see as assisting practitioners to contribute to organisational performance, while statements rated as *unimportant* indicate aspects that will not assist – thus arguing that viewing the function as *only* technical will *not* assist them in contributing to organisational performance. This finding concurs with opinion in literature indicating that strategic corporate communication can contribute the most to organisational performance (De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:6,8; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205; Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; Steyn, 2000c:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17).

7.3.2.6. Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession

The issue of stereotyping within the South African corporate communication landscape is further enlightened by the analysis of the following statements:

Table 7.10: Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
4. Stereotyping on the basis of race exists in the communication profession	4.5	27.4	27.4	24.4	16.4	–	201	3.21
3. Stereotyping on the basis of gender exists in the communication profession	6.1	32.8	22.3	17.0	7.7	14.2	247	2.85
5. In many cases who you know, determines whether you can make a contribution to the organisation	13.7	41.4	12.0	18.9	10.0	4.0	249	3.31

Slightly over thirty percent of the respondents (31.9%) indicated that racial stereotyping does exist in their profession (*fully agree* and *mostly agree*), while 27.4% were *neutral* and 40.8% of respondents *mostly* or *fully disagreed* with the statement.

As shown above 38.9% of respondents *mostly* or *fully agreed* that gender stereotyping did exist within the profession, however almost similar numbers of respondents indicated that they were *neutral* (22.3%) and *mostly* or *fully disagreed* (24.7%) with the statement, and 14.2% *did not know*. It seems that respondents were divided on whether gender stereotyping exists in the profession. However, since almost 40% did indicate their agreement with the statement, the potential negative role of gender stereotyping on a practitioner's contribution to organisational performance, cannot be ignored.

More than half the respondents *fully* or *mostly agreed* (55.1%) with the statement that *In many cases who you know, determines whether you can make a contribution to the organisation*. However 28.9% disagreed with the statement. One could thus argue that practitioners were largely convinced that *who you know* does influence the contribution you can make to the organisation, which highlights the importance of networking. However, on the other hand, the results may be linked to stereotyping, and may either help or hinder the practitioner to make a contribution. Expressed differently: If you are being stereotyped, and therefore, not being taken seriously by the dominant coalition, who you know may help you to

contribute to the organisation's performance. So, in effect, you may not have a choice, except to rely on who you know, in order to try and contribute to organisational performance.

7.3.2.7. Personal characteristics as constraints

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements related to personal characteristics that could play a role in their contribution to organisational performance:

Table 7.11: Personal characteristics as constraints

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
40. Older practitioners (45+) can contribute more to the organisation's performance than younger practitioners	4.5	10.6	45.9	23.6	10.2	5.3	246	2.74
34. In this organisation affirmative action has lead to management expecting less from corporate communication practitioners	4.0	4.4	21.7	26.5	29.3	14.1	249	3.85
2. Homosexual people tend to be better corporate communication practitioners than heterosexual people	1.6	4.4	16.5	14.1	41.0	22.5	249	1.86

Almost half the respondents (45.9%) were *neutral* and a large number *fully* or *mostly disagreed* (33.8%) that older practitioners could contribute more to the organisation than younger practitioners. The respondents' views could be explained by the fact that the corporate communication profession has changed drastically over the years and that *older* experience outside the relational and strategic paradigm, might not be viewed as applicable to the *new* corporate communication landscape. This is in agreement with literature suggesting that there is no an ideal age to be in the profession, as some practitioners are seen as *too old* and others as *too young* to contribute to organisational performance (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:315). This finding was illustrated by the semi-structured interviews which indicated that the *right type of experience* was crucial to practitioners in order to contribute to organisational performance (see section 5.2.2.1.2.), rather than age.

Respondents seemed to believe that *affirmative action has not lead to management expecting less from practitioners' contributions to organisational performance*. Most respondents *mostly* or *fully disagreed* (55.8%), while very few respondents *agreed* (8.4%) with the statement.

Similarly to the semi-structured interview findings, respondents strongly *disagreed* (55.1%) that *homosexual people would make better practitioners than heterosexual people*. Many respondents, 22.5%, opted for the *do not know*-answer and very few respondents, 1.6% *fully agreed* with the statement. Sexual orientation is thus not viewed as important in determining the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. Alternatively, respondents may have reacted to this statement in such a way as to give a socially acceptable response and not to appear to stereotype people.

7.3.2.8. Feminisation

Respondents gave the following responses when asked to indicate their agreement with the statements on feminisation.

Table 7.12: Feminisation

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
1. The salaries of corporate communication practitioners are low because there are so many women in the profession	1.6	19.0	20.6	21.9	17.0	19.8	247	3.42
11. I have experienced sexual harassment in my communication career	4.8	6.0	7.2	9.2	66.3	6.4	249	4.35

It seems as if many respondents were fairly undecided (20.6%) about the influence of the large number of women in the profession on the salaries of practitioners. However, almost double the number of respondents *disagreed* with the statement (38.9%), than those who *agreed* with the statement (20.6%). Also important to note is that only 1.6% *fully agreed* with this statement. The respondents seem to believe that the number of females in the

profession does not directly influence practitioner salaries, or alternatively, consider their own salaries as *not low*. However, keep in mind that most of the respondents were female (see section 6.2.1.).

Two thirds of the respondents *fully disagreed* (66.3%) with the statement regarding experiencing sexual harassment in their careers. However, some respondents did indicate that they have experienced it, therefore one cannot ignore the existence of sexual harassment in the workplace of practitioners.

7.3.2.9. Views on job limitations

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements focusing on job limitations.

Table 7.13: Respondents' view on job limitations

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
27. In my career affirmative action appointments limited me to get positions / to advance to positions for which I was qualified and experienced enough to do	21.9	17.0	17.8	20.2	18.2	4.9	247	2.96
12. I experience tension between the creative / technical and management side of my job	6.8	25.5	21.5	20.7	19.5	6.0	251	3.22

Respondents seemed divided on whether affirmative action limited their advancement as around 20% selected each option from *fully agree* to *fully disagree*. However, almost 40% (38.9%) of the respondents indicated that affirmative action has limited their career progress. These findings are in agreement with the semi-structured interviews, where affirmative action was identified as a strong influence on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

As was expected, a cross-tabulation with race indicated that white respondents have been more negatively affected by affirmative action than black respondents (Eta=0.126, see table 7.14). This raises the question as to whether white practitioners still fill more managerial positions than black practitioners. A cross-tabulation between race and role performed by black and white respondents indicated a slight difference in seniority, with more black respondents as strategists and managers, than white respondents (p=0.036) – something that can possibly be attributed to affirmative action.

Table 7.14: Cross-tabulation of race with statement 30-27 on affirmative action

Race	%					Total	n
	30-27: In my career affirmative action appointments limited me to get positions / to advance to positions for which I was qualified and experienced enough to do						
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree		
White	26.2	19.9	17.3	19.9	16.8	100	191
Black	3.8	3.8	26.9	30.8	34.6	100	26
TOTAL							**217**

Table 7.15: Cross-tabulation of race and actual role

Race	Actual role (%)			Total	n
	Technician	Manager	Strategist		
White	53.4	32.8	13.7	100.0	204
Black	44.8	37.9	17.2	100.0	29
TOTAL					**233**

The respondents also seemed to be divided on whether they *experienced tension between the creative and managerial sides of their jobs*, however slightly more respondents *disagreed* (40.2%) than *agreed* (32.3%) with the statement.

7.3.2.10. International experience

Almost half the respondents agreed (44.9%) that *practitioners with international experience can contribute more to organisational performance than those who do not have international*

experience. It seems that having international experience is not seen as that important by the respondents.

Table 7.16: International experience

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
19. Practitioners with international experience can contribute more to organisational performance than those who do not have international experience	11.8	33.1	29.0	18.0	4.5	3.7	245	3.31

7.3.2.11. Multilingualism

In rating the statement on multilingualism, the respondents were divided on whether multilingualism was *somewhat important*, *important* or *very important*. Multilingualism however, was rated overall as more *important* than *unimportant*. Coupled with the semi-structured interview findings that multilingualism could assist the practitioner, it is thus considered an important variable.

Table 7.17: Importance of multilingualism

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
37. Practitioners being multilingual	23.8	29.0	31.9	12.9	1.2	1.2	248	3.62

7.3.2.12. Clear transition to a new position

The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statement on a clear transition to a new position:

Table 7.18: Clear transitioning to a new position

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
33. When promoted to a higher and/or management position, I focused completely on the new position and did not have to perform any of the previous position's tasks	3.2	7.3	18.6	35.2	23.1	12.6	247	2.23

It would seem that practitioners could not focus only on their new job when promoted, as the majority did not agree with this statement.

As suggested in literature, downsizing in South Africa is at the order of the day, and practitioners may be expected to perform both technical and managerial functions simultaneously. Although the amount of time spent on tasks may vary, it makes a clear transition from one position to the next very complex. However, a practitioner needs to be released from technical duties in order to move toward strategic tasks which can contribute more to organisational performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000:228). Although it is theoretically sound, it may not be realistic for a practitioner to expect to be totally released from all technical duties.

7.4. PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

7.4.1. Organisational-level Variables: Factor Analysis of All Individual Items

The 29 statements representing organisational variables were divided into nine factors by Varimax rotated factor analysis. The communality estimates all proved above 0.3, which

shows that each statement contributed sufficiently to the category of organisational-level variables (see Addendum F). The factors explained a variance of 61.1%.

From this factor analysis it is clear that the respondents did not view or group the concepts in the same constructs as identified in literature. Nine new constructs, or factors, were identified which needed to be labelled. The following table lists the statements included under each factor and the label suggested for each factor.

Table 7.19: Organisational-level: Labels for new constructs

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
30.36	In this organisation the communication practitioners identify new opportunities for communication, rather than responding to events with communication	1	Proactive role of the function
30.35	In this organisation management appreciates the function / role / scope of corporate communication	1	
30.37	In this organisation the communication practitioners are instructed, rather than suggesting actions	1	
30.38	In this organisation electronic media (internet, intranet, web pages, sms) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees, clients or suppliers	1	
30.13	Organisational politics has had a negative influence on my possible contribution to organisational performance	1	
33.45	The practitioner having a clear job description	2	Status of corporate communication within the organisation
33.41	The communication practitioner reporting to the communication manager, rather than to other departments i.e. marketing/ human resources/ corporate affairs	2	
33.22	The practitioner having communication department support (colleagues helping each other out when needed)	2	
33.25	Management's recognition of the communication function	2	
33.19	Management's support in terms of sending the practitioner on courses, workshops etc	2	
33.15	Practitioners and management having shared expectations of the role of corporate communication	3	Relationship with the dominant coalition
33.16	The practitioner being aware of, but not participating in organisational politics	3	
33.18	Management viewing corporate communication as important	3	

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
33.20	The practitioner having direct contact with the CEO / Managing director	3	Relationship with the dominant coalition (continued)
30.9	Having a higher formal qualification than your manager presents a problem in the communication environment	3	
30.30	When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function in this organisation is frank / open about the organisation and its stakeholders' perceptions towards each other	4	Relating to stakeholders
30.31	When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function in this organisation includes as many stakeholder's opinions and views as possible	4	
30.39	In this organisation traditional media (storytelling, industrial theatre) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees or communities	4	
30.8	In this organisation management often tend to take credit for the job done by the communication professional	4	
30.20	I have experienced encroachment (people from other disciplines being appointed in communication positions) in the communication department	5	Security of the communication function in the organisation
30.10	The corporate communication department is always the first to be downsized in difficult economic times	5	
30.15	I am satisfied in my current position	5	
30.14	I have had ample advancement opportunities within the communication profession	5	
30.6	Younger managers know more about corporate communication than older managers (45+)	6	Management's age
30.7	Younger managers tend to be more open to new ideas than older managers (45+)	6	
30.41	Practitioners working in a large organisation can make a better contribution to organisational performance than those in a small organisation	7	Organisational size
30.42	Practitioners working in a small organisation can make a better contribution to organisational performance than those in a large organisation	7	
33.21	The practitioner having been part of an internship programme	8	Capacity building (internship)
30.24	When selecting media for stakeholder communication, this organisation focuses more on the readership profile than the ownership of the newspaper / broadcaster	9	Targeted media use

The new constructs measure reliably with Crönbach alpha coefficients between 0.511 and 0.747.

Table 7.20: Organisational-level: New constructs Crönbach alpha

Construct	CA	CA if deleted
Proactive role of the function	0.638	CA could be higher if two statements were deleted. However not significant.
Status of corporate communication within the organisation	0.687	No increase with any deletions
Relationship with the dominant coalition	0.615	CA could be higher if one statement was deleted. However not significant.
Relating to stakeholders	0.537	CA could be higher if one statement was deleted. However not significant.
Security of the communication function in the organisation	0.585	No increase with any deletions
Management's age	0.747	Only two statements were used
Organisational size	0.511	Only two statements were used
Capacity building (internship)	–	Only one statement, therefore reliability could not be calculated
Targeted media use	–	Only one statement, therefore reliability could not be calculated

7.4.2. Organisational-level Variables: Respondents' Perceptions

The organisational-level variables will be reported on according to the new constructs identified by means of factor analysis, as described above.

7.4.2.1. Proactive role of the function

Respondents indicated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements pertaining to the proactive role of the function.

Table 7.21: The proactive role of the function

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
36. In this organisation the communication practitioners identify new opportunities for communication, rather than responding to events with communication	20.5	41.8	20.5	10.4	1.2	5.6	249	3.74
37. In this organisation the communication practitioners are instructed, rather than suggesting actions	5.3	20.6	20.2	36.8	13.0	4.0	247	3.33
13. Organisational politics has had a negative influence on my possible contribution to organisational performance	15.5	31.9	17.5	15.1	15.9	4.0	251	2.83
35. In this organisation management appreciates the function / role / scope of corporate communication	17.4	46.2	19.4	10.9	2.4	3.6	247	3.68
38. In this organisation electronic media (internet, intranet, web pages, sms) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees, clients or suppliers	46.8	40.4	5.2	5.6	1.2	0.8	250	4.27

Almost two thirds of the respondents (62.3%) (both *fully agreed* and *mostly agreed*) were positive that they were proactive in their organisations by identifying new opportunities rather than responding to events. However, only 20.5% felt very strongly (*fully agreed*) about this issue, while the same number were *neutral*. So although many respondents indicated that they were proactive, it would have been ideal if they had felt stronger about this aspect, as proactive practitioners are considered to be better contributors to organisational performance, as they act more strategically (ref. Steyn, 2000b:33; 2000c:37; Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

The statement regarding communication practitioners being instructed, rather than suggesting actions, elicited the following opinions – only 25.9% *agreed*, 20.2% were *neutral*

and almost half, 49.8%, *disagreed*, suggesting that respondents tended to be proactive in their organisations.

When reporting on the influence of organisational politics on the practitioner's ability to contribute to organisational performance, it is worrying to find that almost half the respondents (47.4%) *agreed* that they had been influenced negatively. Literature suggests that organisational politics exist in every organisation, however, the practitioner is expected to be aware of the influence of organisational politics, but not participate in it (Le Roux, 2004:47), as was also suggested in the semi-structured interviews.

Almost two thirds of the respondents (63.6%) *agreed* that management appreciated corporate communication in their organisations. This is a positive finding for the profession as management's view of corporate communication, can play a role in the contribution that the function makes to the organisation (Black, 1972:1; Gray, 2004:28; Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; O'Neil, 2003a:165).

Furthermore, the fact that management is seen to appreciate the function is in accordance with the suggestion that there is worldwide recognition by management of the function, as the importance of stakeholder support for organisation survival is recognised (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2006:114; IABC, 2002:7; Moss *et al.*, 2000:291; Valin, 2004).

Most respondents seem to use electronic media to communicate to stakeholders (46.8 *fully agreeing* and 40.4% *agreeing*), another aspect pointing towards being proactive and progressive. Embracing new technology can point to an organisational culture of growth and innovation, as well as possibilities of new opportunities for corporate communication given that the practitioner acquires the necessary competencies (ref. Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Nielsen, 2006).

In conclusion it would thus seem that management appreciates the communication function, and that the practitioners in the sample tend to act proactively.

7.4.2.2. Status of corporate communication within the organisation

The respondents rated a number of statements regarding the status of corporate communication in their organisations in terms of importance in enabling them to contribute to organisational performance.

Table 7.22: Status of corporate communication within the organisation

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
22. The practitioner having communication department support (colleagues helping each other out when needed)	41.0	41.8	14.5	1.6	0.8	0.4	249	4.21
41. The communication practitioner reporting to the communication manager, rather than to other departments i.e. marketing/ human resources/ corporate affairs	41.5	31.9	17.7	5.2	1.6	2.0	248	4.09
25. Management's recognition of the communication function	51.8	42.0	6.1	–	–	–	245	4.46
19. Management's support in terms of sending the practitioner on courses, workshops etc	46.8	37.6	12.8	1.2	0.8	0.8	250	4.29
45. The practitioner having a clear job description	53.6	36.0	8.0	1.6	0.8	–	250	4.40

Respondents saw it as *very important* or *important* (82.8%) that they had support from their communication department. Respondents also saw it as an important aspect to report to a communication manager, rather than to other departments (73.4% indicated *important* and *very important*). It may imply that respondents were aware of the potential negative influence that the encroachment of other functions could have on the communication practitioner.

These findings correlate with suggestions in literature that creating an organisational culture of departmental support and teamwork offers practitioners the opportunity to contribute more to organisational performance (ref. Dozier *et al.,* 1995:11). Furthermore literature also suggests that encroachment limits the function's contribution to organisational performance (Ehling *et al.*, 1992:359,363; Grunig *et al.*, 2001:179-182; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600; Lauzen, 1991:245; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211; Lee, 2005:279).

Management recognition of the function was rated extremely high with 93.8% of respondents rating it as *important* or *very important*. Also, management's support by sending the practitioner on courses and workshops was rated as *important* or *very important* by 84.4% of

the respondents. *Having a clear job description*, which could relate to having a shared expectation with management on the practitioner's outputs, was rated by the vast majority of respondents as *important* or *very important* (89.6%).

In line with the findings literature suggests that management should view corporate communication as important enough to be a separate management function (Grunig, 2006a; 1992a:10, 24, 26; Grunig & White, 1992:38). This would explain the respondents' high rating of the importance of reporting to a communication manager (no encroachment), as well as management's recognition of the function.

Furthermore, literature suggests that management's recognition of the function is crucial in determining the function's contribution to organisational performance (ref. Gray, 2004:28; O'Neil, 2003a:165). And even more crucial is managements' support for the practitioner, as this would allow the practitioner to act strategically and contribute to organisational performance (Awad, 1985:25; Grunig, 2001:8; Sweep *et al.*, 1994:327).

It is therefore logical that a clear job description would create a shared understanding between management and the practitioner, regarding the practitioner's duties. Underlining this shared expectation would be management's understanding and support for the function. Shared expectations can thus directly influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance (ref. Dozier *et al.*, 1995; Gray, 2004:26-27).

In agreement with findings from literature (ref. Dozier *et al.*, 1995:11; O'Neil, 2003a:165; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009:422), respondents in this study made it clear that they needed management and departmental support in order to fully contribute to organisational performance.

7.4.2.3. Relationship with the dominant coalition

Respondents rated the following statements regarding the relationship with the dominant coalition in terms of importance for the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Table 7.23: Importance of the relationship with the dominant coalition

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
16. The practitioner being aware of, but not participating in organisational politics	32.7	41.1	16.1	5.6	1.6	2.8	248	4.00
15. Practitioners and management having shared expectations of the role of corporate communication	52.6	34.9	9.2	1.6	1.6	–	249	4.35
18. Management viewing corporate communication as important	61.2	35.6	3.2	–	–	–	250	4.58
20. The practitioner having direct contact with the CEO / Managing director	68.5	27.0	3.6	0.4	0.4	–	248	4.63

In agreement with the semi-structured interview findings and literature (Le Roux, 2004:39, 46-47), respondents agreed that it was important not to get involved in, but to be aware of organisational politics (73.8% rated it as *important* or *very important*). It seems that respondents were aware that participation in organisational politics could potentially limit their contribution to organisational performance, as this would infringe on ethical practice (ref. Le Roux, 2004:39, 47).

Most respondents (87.5%) saw it as *important* or *very important* that shared expectations between management and the practitioner were created. Together with this finding, *management's view of corporate communication* as *important* was also rated highly – a 96.8% strong contingent of respondents indicated this as *important* or *very important*. *Having direct contact with the CEO or MD* seemed to be a vital requirement, with 68.5% of respondents rating is as *very important* and 27% rating it as *important*.

As stated before, shared expectations between management and the practitioner were cited in literature as crucial for practitioners in order to assist them to contribute to organisational performance (ref. Gray, 2004:26-27). Furthermore, literature suggests that management is becoming more aware of the importance of stakeholder communication for organisational survival (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2006:114; IABC, 2002:7; Moss *et al.*, 2000:291; Valin, 2004).

Therefore, management support for corporate communication has increased. This is the case, even if the practitioner's actual tasks are still not always understood (Wright, 1998:115). Having access to the dominant coalition would empower practitioners to contribute more to organisational performance, as they would have access to more information and influential people (Hill *et al.*, 1994:217).

In line with literature then, it would thus appear that respondents acknolwedged a *shared understanding with management on the role of corporate communication within the organisation*, with the implication that the practitioner was considered important enough to *have direct contact with the CEO / MD*.

The respondents were also asked to share their opinion regarding having a higher qualification than their manager in the communication environment.

Table 7.24: Relationship with the dominant coalition

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
9. Having a higher formal qualification than your manager presents a problem in the communication environment	10.4	17.9	21.9	21.9	13.1	14.7	251	3.11

Respondents were fairly divided on whether *having a higher formal qualification than their manager would represent a problem to the communication practitioner* (28.3% *fully agreed*, or agreed, 21.9 % were *neutral*, and 35% *mostly* or *fully disagreed*). This may be as a result of not all respondents having experienced this situation in their careers as yet.

The respondents' perceptions of their relationship with the dominant coalition suggested that this construct is a strong variable that could influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. However, the situation where managers held lower educational qualifications than practitioners, was not rated as an important factor, and was not seen as a big problem by the respondents.

7.4.2.4. Relating to stakeholders

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements on relating to stakeholders and the subsequent influence on their contribution to organisational performance.

Table 7.25: Relating to stakeholders

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
30. When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function in this organisation is frank/ open about the organisation and its stakeholders' perceptions towards each other	22.7	41.3	19.8	8.5	2.0	6.0	247	3.79
31. When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function in this organisation includes as many stakeholder's opinions and views as possible	17.7	35.9	22.6	13.7	2.4	7.7	248	3.57
39. In this organisation traditional media (storytelling, industrial theatre) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees or communities	9.3	19.8	15.8	20.6	29.1	5.3	247	2.57
8. In this organisation management often tend to take credit for the job done by the communication professional	11.6	26.5	20.5	22.9	13.3	5.2	249	3.00

In dealing with stakeholders the respondents indicated that most practitioners were open and frank towards their stakeholders, however, the majority did not feel very strongly about it (22.7% *fully agreed*, 41.3% *mostly agreed*). The respondents indicated a very similar attitude towards including stakeholder opinions and views (17.7% *fully agreed*, 35.9% *agreed*, 22.6% were *neutral* and 16.1% *disagreed*).

This may mean that the respondents knew that they should be open and frank when dealing with stakeholders and consider their viewpoints in most cases, but the reality was that it was not always possible, or within their control. Literature suggests that relationships with

stakeholders should be created through two-way symmetrical communication (ref. Broom *et al.*, 2000:6, 18; Grunig, 2006b:3; Ledingham & Burning in Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160) that is transparent in order to create and increase trust (Jahansoozi, 2006:80, 83).

Organisations that apply symmetrical communication also adhere to the following characteristics in their organisational culture, i.e. free exchange of information, decentralised decision-making, the use of compromise and negotiation to resolve conflict, and the acknowledgement that they are interdependent on their stakeholders (Grunig, 1989:17). The lack of a strong view on the abovementioned questionnaire statements may indicate that the organisations represented by the respondents in this study, did not fully live up to these standards.

The use of traditional media was rated very low, with 49.7% of the respondents indicating that they did not use traditional media at all. This could indicate that the respondents only focused on more affluent stakeholders who preferred more modern media, or, alternatively, that the organisations' stakeholder landscape consisted of more urbanised stakeholders, where illiteracy was not a factor.

It would therefore seem that the respondents might adapt to their stakeholders, in order to be effective within the South African environment (Naudé & Le Roux, 2005:8-9), but that these stakeholders are not in all cases, as illiterate and difficult to reach as is sometimes suggested in literature (see sections 3.7.5. and 3.7.6.).

The respondents were fairly divided on whether management took credit for a job done by them. This could be attributed to the fact that, in some organisations, managers take credit for the job done by practitioners, or that practitioners support management with outputs such as speeches that the manager needs to be credited for. Therefore, since an overall agreement with the statement was not reached, it indicated that respondents did get credit for their work, although it may not always happen when it is due.

In total relating to stakeholders was seen as important. The respondents indicated that, as far as possible, they tried to take stakeholder views and opinions into account while being open and frank in their communication.

7.4.2.5. Security of the communication function in the organisation

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements about the security of the communication function in their organisations.

Table 7.26: Security of the communication function in the organisation

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
10. The corporate communication department is always the first to be downsized in difficult economic times	14.3	27.0	21.4	16.7	5.6	15.1	252	2.67
14. I have had ample advancement opportunities within the communication profession	10.4	27.1	28.7	20.3	8.4	5.2	251	3.11
15. I am satisfied in my current position	25.0	34.7	16.1	16.1	7.7	0.4	248	3.53
20. I have experienced encroachment (people from other disciplines being appointed in communication positions) in the communication department	10.6	30.5	22.8	15.4	8.9	11.8	246	2.79

Almost twice as many respondents *agreed* (41.3%) that *the communication department would be the first to be downsized*, than those who were *neutral* (21.4%) or who *disagreed* (22.3%). Many respondents also provided a *do not know*-answer (15.1%).

This finding seems in agreement with the statement that economic pressures can lead to the downsizing of the public relations department, or the minimisation of its budget (as reported in the IABC survey of 2002 (IABC, 2002:7-8)).

The respondents were divided about *having ample advancement opportunities in the profession*, but the majority *agreed* that they did (37.5%). Most respondents (59.7%) indicated that they were satisfied in their current position – but almost a quarter did not share this view, and a further 16.1% were *neutral*. The almost 60 / 40 distribution of views on satisfaction in their current position is worrisome. Various suggestions for the reasons for this

dissatisfaction could, however, include aspects such as stereotyping, affirmative action, and various country and professional-level variables. However, a detailed explanation of the reasons for their dissatisfaction did not form part of the study.

Many respondents (41.1%) have experienced encroachment, however, some reported a *neutral* opinion (22.8%) on this issue, and a few expressed no opinion (11.8%).

As suggested in literature, encroachment is found in the profession. Literature then further explained that encroachment marginalises corporate communication (Ehling *et al.*, 1992:359,363; Grunig *et al.*, 2001:179-180; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211; Lee, 2005:279), which in turn could contribute to some of the respondents' dissatisfaction within their positions.

To summarise, it is presumed that practitioners did not feel very secure in their positions in the organisation, as there was some expectation of being downsized in economically difficult times, encroachment was experienced, and not all practitioners had ample advancement opportunities. All these issues contributed to the number of respondents who were not satisfied in their current position, as these factors all impinge on their contribution to organisational performance.

7.4.2.6. Management's age

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements regarding the age of management within their organisations.

Table 7.27: Management's age

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
6. Younger managers know more about corporate communication than older managers (45+)	5.6	20.6	21.4	26.2	22.2	4.0	248	2.60
7. Younger managers tend to be more open to new ideas than older managers (45+)	14.0	48.4	13.2	13.6	9.2	1.6	250	3.45

Respondents agreed that *younger managers within the organisation were more open to new ideas than older managers* within the organisation. However, only 26.2% could *fully* or *mostly agree* that *younger managers in the organisation knew more about corporate communication than older managers*.

7.4.2.7. Organisational size

The respondents were asked to show their level of agreement with the following statements on the size of the organisation and how that impacted on their ability to contribute to organisational performance.

Table 7.28: Organisational size

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
41. Practitioners working in a large organisation can make a better contribution to organisational performance than those in a small organisation	3.2	7.3	28.6	32.7	23.0	5.2	248	2.31
42. Practitioners working in a small organisation can make a better contribution to organisational performance than those in a large organisation	3.6	22.6	27.8	22.2	17.7	6.0	248	2.70

More respondents *agreed* with making a better contribution in a small organisation (26.2%) than in a large organisation (10.5%). However, despite a slight preference for the smaller organisation by a minority of respondents, the size of an organisation seemed to be less important to most respondents.

This finding seems to contradict findings in literature in that smaller organisations were seen as more conducive towards corporate communication practice. Dozier and Grunig (1992:398, 402) argued that the structure of the organisation does not necessarily influence the communication function, as long as the structure is flexible and can provide the practitioner with access to the dominant coalition. Fatt (1996:19) agrees with this by arguing that a big

organisation can also take decisions quickly, similar to their smaller counterparts, when they have a commitment to communicate within.

7.4.2.8. Capacity building (internship)

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statement on capacity building impacting on their contribution to organisational performance.

Table 7.29: Importance of capacity building

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
21. The practitioner having been part of an internship programme	11.7	22.7	32.4	25.1	5.7	2.4	247	3.10

Most respondents indicated that this statement was only *somewhat important* (32.4%), while some mentioned it as *important* (34.4%) and others as *unimportant* (30.8%). This aspect seems to be fairly unimportant to the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. Considering this result in the light of the literature on this matter (see section 3.5.4.), it could indicate that internships are not the norm in South African organisations and therefore, not yet considered to be important.

When considering this statement related to respondent age, it delivered the following cross-tabulation (see table 7.30), which proved to be statistically significant with Eta of 0.309. The *older than 60* category was omitted as it only included 8 respondents.

This tabulation indicated that more of the younger respondents (those younger than 25, 25-30, and even 31-40) considered being part of an internship programme as more important than the older respondents did. This could be due to the fact that they were or had been part of such a programme, or had witnessed the progress that peers in an internship programmes had made. Older respondents possibly did not view internships as important since such programmes had only recently become more common in business, and they would not have

been part of such a programme. Alternatively, they might not see the benefit of an internship programme to practitioners.

Table 7.30: Cross-tabulation of age with statement 33-21

Respondent age	%					Total	n
	33-21: The practitioner having been part of an internship programme						
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all		
Younger than 25	13.3	33.3	33.3	–	20	100	15
25-30	9.6	34.6	42.3	11.5	1.9	100	52
31-40	4.9	30.9	32.1	19.8	12.3	100	81
41-50	–	17.5	26.3	42.1	14.0	100	57
51-60	10.7	10.7	39.3	14.3	25.0	100	28
TOTAL							**233**

7.4.2.9. Targeted media use

Targeted media use was tested with the following statement in table 7.31, where respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement.

Table 7.31: Targeted media use

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
24. When selecting media for stakeholder communication, this organisation focuses more on the readership profile than the ownership of the newspaper / broadcaster	38.2	30.1	14.5	3.2	3.2	10.8	249	4.09

In literature Grunig (2001:19) and Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a:13) argued that, as a country influence, the practitioner should be aware of who controls the media and to what extent, as, in many, although not all instances, media ownership indicated who exerted media control (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:14). Combined with the fact that the practitioner also needs to be aware of the stakeholders' media use needs for their specific environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64-65, 108, 195-196), this creates a situation in which the practitioner therefore needs to balance both aspects. However, the respondents indicated, when answering this statement, that most organisations' focus was on the readership profile, rather than on the ownership of the medium when considering which media to use in stakeholder communication.

7.5. PERCEPTIONS ON INDUSTRY-LEVEL VARIABLES

7.5.1. Industry-level Variables: Factor Analysis of All Individual Items

The statements testing industry-level variables were categorised into only one factor by means of factor analysis (see section 7.2.). Therefore, one can deduce that the respondents also viewed these statements as pertaining to one construct – industry-level variables. The variance was explained as 50.58%. The communality estimates all proved above 0.3, which shows that each statement contributes sufficiently to industry-level variables (see Addendum F for the factor analysis).

The following table lists the statements included in the single factor and for which the single label of *industry-level variables* was maintained.

Table 7.32: Industry-level: New construct

Q no	Statement	Factor	(New) construct
33.31	31. The practitioner understanding the importance of corporate social responsibility to the organisation's performance	1	Industry-level variables
33.30	30. The practitioner being sensitive to involve all necessary stakeholders in a certain issue	1	
33.32	32. The practitioner understanding the principles of the King II report[21]	1	
33.38	38. Practitioners knowing how and with whom to lobby	1	

7.5.2. Industry-level Variables: Respondents' Perceptions

Table 7.33: Importance of industry-level variables

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
31. The practitioner understanding the importance of corporate social responsibility for the organisation's performance	38.8	48.4	12.4	0.4	–	–	250	4.26
30. The practitioner being sensitive to involve all necessary stakeholders in a certain issue	36.5	44.2	17.7	0.8	–	0.8	249	4.17
32. The practitioner understanding the principles of the King II report	23.0	36.6	24.7	4.9	1.2	9.5	243	3.83
38. Practitioners knowing how and with whom to lobby	29.2	43.2	20.4	2.8	0.8	3.6	250	4.01

Respondents were asked to rate four statements on the impact of industry-level variables pertaining to the industry in which the practitioner is working (see section 3.6), on their

[21] The *King III Report* was not yet released at the time the data was gathered.

contribution to organisational performance, from *very important* to *not important at all*. Since the study was conducted across industries, the statements were phrased more generally.

The respondents understood the importance of corporate social responsibility to the organisation's performance with 87.2% rating it as *very important* and *important*. The respondents, furthermore, understood the importance of *the practitioner being sensitive to the involvement of all necessary stakeholders on issues*, with 80.7% rating it as *very important* or *important*. Some authors in literature agree that being aware and being able to adapt communication to the specific stakeholders in the industry environment of the specific practitioner's employer, assists them to make a contribution to organisational performance (ref. Jonah, 2001:3, 8, 9).

Understanding the principles of the *King II Report* was seen as *important* or *very important* (59.6%), but less so than involving the stakeholders in issues and understanding the importance of social responsibility, as can be deduced from the lower mean score. Almost a quarter of the respondents (24.7%) marked knowledge of the *King II Report* as only *somewhat important*. It was pointed out in literature that being aware of regulations pertaining to the industry in which practitioners operate assists them to contribute to organisational performance (see section 3.6.2.1.). The *King II Report*, which is relevant across industries, should therefore be very well understood and seen as important by practitioners. The findings could therefore, suggest that:

- there are industries in which some respondents work that may not put a high premium on being compliant with the *King II Report,* or,
- it might indicate that compliance to the *King II Report* was seen as the responsibility of another function, due to the fact that stakeholder management did not receive such a strong focus in the *King II Report* as it now has in the *King III Report* (see section 1.4.1.2.).

However, it could also point to the respondents' ignorance or a lack of knowledge of the report and its application.

Knowing whom to lobby with, in other words knowing the industry players, was seen as *important* (72.4%). However 20.4% rated it as only *somewhat important*. It is interesting to note that knowing who and how to lobby is seen as more important than understanding the principles of the *King II Report*.

7.6. PERCEPTIONS ON COUNTRY-LEVEL VARIABLES

7.6.1. Country-level Variables: Factor Analysis

From factor analysis of the nine statements on country-level variables, three factors were identified by Varimax rotated factor analysis. From this it is clear that the respondents did not view the constructs identified under country-level variables in the same categories as identified in literature. The communality estimates all proved above 0.3, which shows that each statement contributes sufficiently to country-level variables. The factor analysis explained a variance of 54.5% (see Addendum F).

The following table lists the statements included under each factor and the new labels for each factor.

Table 7.34: Country-level: New constructs

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
33.39	Practitioners knowing different cultural protocols and/or being able to frame messages for different cultural stakeholders	1	Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges
33.26	The practitioner being open to the challenges and changes in South Africa	1	
33.48	The practitioner having knowledge of South African media legislation i.e. freedom of speech, slander legislation etc	1	
33.36	Practitioners knowing how to deal / communicate with both literate and illiterate stakeholders	1	
33.27	The practitioner having experience of working in South Africa	1	
30.22	Practitioners with close ties to people from certain political parties have the opportunity to make more contributions to organisational performance	2	Sense of security
30.26	I have job security in my current position	2	
30.43	Using BEE agencies / contracts to fulfil corporate communication tasks limits the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance	3	Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands
30.44	In my organisation we have to deal with activist publics regularly	3	

One of the factors emanating from the factor analysis measured highly reliable with a Crönbach alpha score of 0.754, and another factor fairly reliable with α=0.274 for two statements. However the remaining factor did not deliver a sufficient reliability score.

Table 7.35: Country-level: New construct Crönbach alpha

Construct	Crönbach alpha	Crönbach alpha if statement were deleted
Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges	0.754	Crönbach alpha could not be increased with the omission of statements.
False sense of security	0.080	Only included two statements.
Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands	0.274	Only included two statements.

7.6.2. Country-level Variables: Respondents' Perceptions

The respondents' perceptions on country-level variables playing a role in their contribution to organisational performance will be discussed according to the new constructs identified in the factor analysis.

7.6.2.1. Ability to deal with South African diversity and challengers

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statements with regard to the practitioner's ability to deal with diversity and challenges unique to South Africa.

Respondents rated it as extremely *important* (92.4% - both *very important* and *important*) that practitioners were open to the challenges and changes in South Africa. Specifically illiteracy, where 90.8% of respondents saw knowledge regarding how to deal with illiterate stakeholders as both *very important* and *important*, seems to be a key variable to respondents.

Having experience of working in South Africa (80.2% – both *very important* and *important*), knowing cultural protocols (78.3% – both *very important* and *important*) and the practitioner having knowledge of South African media legislation (75.2% – both *very important* and *important*), received high ratings from the majority of respondents. However, many respondents rated these statements as only *somewhat important*: 21.6% for knowledge of South African media legislation, 17.3% for knowing cultural protocols and 15.3% for having

South African experience. See table 7.37 for a ranked order of these statements according to their mean scores.

Table 7.36: Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
39. Practitioners knowing different cultural protocols and/or being able to frame messages for different cultural stakeholders	32.9	45.4	17.3	2.0	0.4	2.0	249	4.11
26. The practitioner being open to the challenges and changes in South Africa	48.6	43.8	7.2	0.4	–	–	249	4.41
48. The practitioner having knowledge of South African media legislation i.e. freedom of speech, slander legislation etc	36.4	38.8	21.6	1.6	0.8	0.8	250	4.09
36. Practitioners knowing how to deal / communicate with both literate and illiterate stakeholders	51.6	39.2	6.0	1.2	0.8	1.2	250	4.41
27. The practitioner having experience of working in South Africa	41.9	38.3	15.3	4.0	–	0.4	248	4.19

Table 7.37: Rank order of country-level challenges

Rank order	Statement
1	The practitioner being open to the challenges and changes in South Africa
1	Practitioners knowing how to deal / communicate with both literate and illiterate stakeholders
3	The practitioner having experience of working in South Africa
4	Practitioners knowing different cultural protocols and/or being able to frame messages for different cultural stakeholders
5	The practitioner having knowledge of South African media legislation i.e. freedom of speech, slander legislation etc

These findings could indicate, in agreement with literature (see section 3.7.), that the practitioner needs to have knowledge of the South African environment, as well as the fact that some respondents could have argued that the South African environment is different from other environments. To summarise then, knowledge pertaining to the specific unique South African environment is thus necessary for the practitioner to have in order to contribute to organisational performance.

7.6.2.2. Sense of security

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on their sense of security within their positions.

Table 7.38: Sense of security

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
22. Practitioners with close ties to people from certain political parties have the opportunity to make more contributions to organisational performance	4.8	25.7	29.3	16.5	9.2	14.5	249	3.00
26. I have job security in my current position	27.8	40.8	15.1	9.4	5.3	1.6	245	3.78

Respondents seemed to be divided about having a political affiliation that would aid them in contributing more to organisational performance. The answers regarding ties with a political party thus seem to be quite varied and could possibly be linked back to the specific organisational environment or industry environment in which the practitioner practised, or alternatively, to the political activeness of the practitioner, or even how important political lobbying was for their employers.

Most respondents indicated that they had job security (68.6%). However, 29.8% felt *neutral* or *disagreed* that they had job security. The number of respondents said to experience job security is interesting in light of the number of respondents who had indicated earlier that

public relations practitioners were always first on the chopping block in tough economic times (see section 7.4.2.5.). On the other hand, this could also indicate the respondents' ignorance about the vulnerability of their own positions.

7.6.2.3. Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands

Two statements tested respondents' agreement or disagreement regarding compliance with South African external stakeholders' demands.

Table 7.39: Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
43. Using BEE agencies / contracts to fulfil corporate communication tasks limits the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance	9.2	19.3	31.7	17.7	8.4	13.7	249	3.04
44. In my organisation we have to deal with activist publics regularly	5.3	11.7	21.1	21.5	25.5	15.0	247	2.41

Almost a third (31.7%) of the respondents were *neutral* about using BEE agencies / contracts which were said to limit their contribution to organisational performance. However, an almost similar number of respondents then fully or *mostly agreed* (28.5%) and *fully* or *mostly disagreed* (26.1%) with this statement. It could indicate practitioners' differing experiences of having to apply BEE requirements regarding service providers. This finding is interesting as the BEE Act (53/2004) seems to influence practitioners in their work, as suggested in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.2.1.8.). However, it could also have something to do with the profile of respondents, or it could indicate that respondents accepted this requirement and have moved on, with this not being an issue in many of their environments any more.

When considering the responses to statement 30-43, a cross-tabulation with race was done which delivered a statistical significance of Eta=0.245. The Asian, Coloured and Indian

demographic groups were omitted as only a few respondents from these groups answered this question.

Table 7.40: Cross-tabulation of race with statement 30-43 on using BEE agencies

Race	%					Total	n
	30-43: Using BEE agencies / contracts to fulfil corporate communication tasks limits the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance						
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree		
White	8.0	14.8	40.9	23.9	12.5	100	176
Black	26.1	47.8	21.7	–	4.3	100	23
TOTAL							**214**

This table indicates that black respondents felt much more limited by having to make use of BEE agencies / contracts than white respondents. It is, however, possible that white respondents also experienced the same limitation, but their response to this question might have been guided by the need to be politically correct, and not appear as if they were against black economic empowerment.

Almost half the respondents (47%) indicated that they did not have to deal with activist publics regularly, with 21.1% being *neutral* about this statement. The question could be asked as to why respondents were not dealing with activist publics? Are practitioners in touch with the environment and activist movements, or are they only focussing on the technical role – or, contrary to literature (see section 3.7.3.), are there really no activists in their environment? One could then also ask the question whether respondents actually conducted proper environmental scanning and performed the strategist role. In literature the degree of activism in South Africa was described as high, with specifically active labour unions (see section 3.7.3.). One could thus argue that this finding indicated that:

- practitioners may have viewed labour unions as strategic and not activist publics (which the statement referred to), or,
- that the practitioners were not aware of, or involved with, activist publics as specifically labour unions are, in many cases, dealt with by the human resource department.

However, one should also keep in mind that the large number of respondents indicating that they do not deal with activist publics regularly, can be influenced by the small number of respondents found to be performing the strategist role (see section 6.6.5.).

It would seem that practitioners do experience pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands, but that their experience could be influenced by factors such as their race. The above findings could further be argued to support literature in indicating that the application of the fundamentals of public relations will differ, as per the specific country environment in which the practitioners practice (ref. Sriramesh, 2003a:xxv; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:5).

7.7. PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

7.7.1. Professional-level Variables: Factor Analysis

The statements included as part of the professional variables, were divided into five factors by Varimax rotated factor analysis. The five factors differed from the categories suggested through literature analysis. The communality estimates all proved above 0.3, which shows that each statement contributes sufficiently to professional-level constructs. The factor analysis explains 61.04% of the variance (see Addendum F).

The following table lists the statements included under each factor and the new label for each factor.

Table 7.41: Professional-level: New constructs

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
30.16	Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner in making contributions to organisational performance	1	Accreditation
30.17	Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner with acknowledgement in the organisation	1	
33.49	The corporate communication function being accredited (when this could happen)	1	

Q no	Statement	Factor	New construct
33.43	The practitioner belonging to a professional organisation	2	Visible leadership in the profession
33.17	The practitioner attempting to educate management on the importance of corporate communication	2	
33.14	The practitioner speaking out about their success in the workplace	2	
33.42	The practitioner being very visible in the organisation	2	
30.32	In my career I had to continually defend / advocate the communication function to top management	2	
30.29	I have come across corrupt corporate communication practitioners in my career	3	Practitioners harming the function
30.28	I have come across incapable practitioners in my career	3	
30.25	The vague definition of corporate communication hinders practitioners in contributing to organisation performance	3	
33.44	The practitioner being ethical and adhering to professional values and norms	4	Valuing their own profession
30.23	I have a responsibility to give back to the profession by writing case studies, participating in talks at conferences, etc	4	
30.21	In my career I could successfully educate management on what corporate communication entails	4	
30.18	Practitioners with knowledge of international best practice can contribute more to the organisation than those who do not have international best practice knowledge	5	International best practice knowledge

The new constructs were measured reliable as noted in table 7.42. Only one construct measured a Crönbach alpha coefficient of 0.214 which is not satisfactory.

Table 7.42: Professional-level: New construct Crönbach alpha

Construct	Crönbach alpha	Crönbach alpha if deleted
Accreditation	0.791	CA can be increased to 0.870 if one item is omitted.
Visible leadership in the profession	0.214	CA can be increased to 0.565 if one item is omitted.
Practitioners harming the function	0.514	CA can be increased to 0.649 if one item is omitted.*
Valuing their own profession	0.409	CA can be increased to 0.450 if one item is omitted.
International best practice knowledge	–	Consisted of only one statement.

** The statement were however not omitted for two reasons: (i) trying to re-categorise the statements for the professional-level into any other combination of constructs, proved to be less reliable in total, and (ii) factor analysis did show that these statements could be grouped together.*

7.7.2. Professional-level Variables: Respondents' Perceptions

The respondents' perceptions on professional-level variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance are discussed according to the new constructs identified above.

7.7.2.1. Accreditation

When asked to what degree respondents agreed with the following statements on accreditation's influence on their contribution to organisational performance, their responses were as depicted in table 7.43.

More than 60% of respondents (62.6%) *fully* or *mostly agreed* that *accreditation would assist the practitioner in making a contribution to organisational performance*. More respondents than expected were *neutral* (18.7%), with 12.2% *disagreeing* and 6.5% indicating that they *did not know*.

The statement on *accreditation assisting the practitioner with acknowledgement in the organisation*, produced more or less similar results, with 68.4% of respondents fully agreeing or *mostly agreeing*, 17.2% being *neutral*, 16.4% *fully* or *mostly disagreeing* and 6% indicating that they *did not know*. Also interesting to note was the number of respondents who selected

mostly agree rather than *fully agree*, indicating that their agreement on this issue was not extremely strong.

Table 7.43: Accreditation

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
16. Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner in making contributions to organisational performance	21.5	41.1	18.7	8.1	4.1	6.5	246	3.73
17. Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner with acknowledgement in the organisation	22.4	38.0	17.2	11.2	5.2	6.0	250	3.65

From these results it is apparent that respondents thought that accreditation could assist practitioners with acknowledgement and in making a contribution to organisational performance, however, approximately a third of the respondents were unsure or *disagreed* with this statement. This places a question mark on the support for accreditation: if accreditation is not strongly wanted, or the advantages of accreditation are not perceived by practitioners, it is not an issue that will receive much attention from practitioners in general.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statement on the accreditation of the corporate communication function.

Table 7.44: Importance of accreditation

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
49. The corporate communication function being accredited (when this could happen)	26.4	37.8	20.3	8.5	3.3	3.7	246	3.78

Practitioners felt positive about the function being accredited, but their support was not strong as only 26.4% saw it as *very important*, 37.8% saw it as *important* and 20.3% saw it as *somewhat important*. Only a few respondents (11.8%) saw it as not *important* and 3.7% as *not applicable* to the practitioner contributing to organisational performance.

Similar to the earlier rating of accreditation, respondents thus considered accreditation important, but probably not essential.

In summary, it seems that there is an almost a two thirds majority of respondents who would like to see the function accredited, in order to assist them in contributing to organisational performance. However, the contribution to organisational performance is not necessarily strongly linked to accreditation. Almost a third of the respondents would not necessarily pursue this issue.

This could point to the fact that the respondents need to be educated regarding the benefits of accreditation, or that accreditation is not yet demanded and valued in business, or alternatively that the respondents perceive the nature of the corporate communication profession as not necessarily suitable for accreditation.

The results regarding accreditation also become clearer when compared with the number of practitioners who are members of a professional association (63.7%) or specifically a communication association (21.0%). Since many respondents are not currently members of a professional association, the benefits of accreditation may be foreign to them. Another possibility is that some respondents may not be members of these bodies, because they do not see these bodies as strong enough, or they may not be in a position to pursue accreditation, or do not view corporate communication as a *strong* profession that warrants accreditation.

The findings about accreditation correlate with the semi-structured interview respondents who argued that there need to be push and pull factors when considering accreditation (see section 5.2.2.5.3.). Business ought to want and acknowledge accreditation (pull factor) and practitioners should want accreditation (push factor), however, this is not currently the case. It also agrees with L'Etang's (2004:221) finding that only a small group of practitioners are concerned with accreditation and many feel that professional status is not needed to conduct their work.

7.7.2.2. Visible leadership in the profession

The importance of visible leadership in the profession was measured by a number of statements.

Table 7.45: Importance of visible leadership in the profession

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
43. The practitioner belonging to a professional organisation	15.2	22.0	37.6	16.0	6.8	2.4	250	3.23
17. The practitioner attempting to educate management on the importance of corporate communication	39.4	43.4	13.9	2.4	–	0.8	251	4.21
14. The practitioner speaking out about their success in the workplace	15.7	22.5	34.9	19.3	5.6	2.0	249	3.24
42. The practitioner being very visible in the organisation	40.6	38.6	17.5	2.4	–	0.8	251	4.18

The statements regarding *the practitioner belonging to a professional organisation* and *practitioners speaking out about their success in the workplace* obtained very similar results. More than a third of the respondents saw these statements as only *somewhat important*, with just over twenty percent viewing them as *important*. An almost similar number of respondents viewed the statements as both *very important* and *unimportant*.

In turn, the statements: *the practitioner attempting to educate management on the importance of corporate communication* and *the practitioners being very visible in the organisation*, reported comparable results. About 40% of the respondents viewed them as *very important* and almost the same number as *important*. Very few respondents viewed them as *unimportant*.

It seems as if respondents thought it much more important to be visible in the organisation than to speak out about their success. The focus is thus more on the action – the *do* activity – than talking about it.

Table 7.46: Experience of visible leadership in the profession

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
32. In my career I had to continually defend / advocate the communication function to top management	11.8	26.4	22.8	25.2	9.8	4.1	246	2.94

More than a third (38.2%) of the respondents indicated that they had to defend / advocate the function. Almost a quarter of the respondents (22.8%) were *neutral* and 35% indicated that they did not have to advocate or defend the profession.

Practitioners generally rather provide visible leadership in the profession by education management and by being visible in the organisation. Some practitioners advocate and defend the function and speak out about their success, however, these techniques are apparently not favoured by all. In providing visible leadership in the profession one would expect the role of professional membership to be important, but only some practitioners see professional membership as important – most downplayed its usefulness. This is in agreement with the semi-structured interview findings, where respondents indicated that they had been members of a professional body(ies) at some stage, but due to the fact that the professional body was not perceived to contribute value to their careers, their membership was cancelled (see sections 5.2.2.5.1. and 5.2.2.5.2.). Interestingly, however, the professional body chairpersons acknowledged that the professional bodies should provide visible leadership in the profession by educating management and providing information to both members and the business community on the value of communication (see sections 5.3.2.1. and 5.3.2.2.).

The findings regarding visible leadership correlate with the argument on prominence and effectiveness put forward by Lubbe (1994:27). Practitioners thus seem to agree, in accordance with literature, that the lack of recognition can be negated by showing the importance of the function. For example, through visibility the function can gain prominence (Bhimani, 1995:275). Respondents however, did not feel as strongly as suggested in literature, that they had to defend the practice.

7.7.2.3. Practitioners harming the function

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements about practitioners harming the function.

Table 7.47: Practitioners harming the function

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
28. I have come across incapable practitioners in my career	38.6	32.1	16.7	6.9	2.4	3.3	246	1.99
29. I have come across corrupt corporate communication practitioners in my career	21.2	19.2	24.0	13.6	10.8	11.2	250	2.70
25. The vague definition of corporate communication hinders practitioners in contributing to organisation performance	11.8	41.1	23.2	13.0	4.1	6.9	246	2.53

Most of the respondents, 70.7%, reported to have come across incapable practitioners (*fully* or *mostly agree*), with a strong contingent *fully agreeing* (38.6%) with the statement. Incapability thus seems to be a problem within the profession.

A large number of respondents, 40.4%, reported encountering corrupt practitioners. Specifically in a profession where ethics is of importance, this is a high percentage of practitioners to have come across corrupt peers. Some respondents were *neutral* (24%), while 24.4% reported that they had not had contact with corrupt practitioners, and 11.2% indicated that they *did not know*. These findings could suggest that the word *corrupt* may have different meanings to different respondents, or is dependent on the specific respondent's experience with such practitioners.

When indicating their agreement with the statement on the vague definition of the function keeping practitioners from contributing to organisational performance, more than half the respondents *fully* or *mostly agreed* (52.9%) – and almost a quarter was *neutral* (23.2%). The

problem with the vague definition of the function is thus acknowledged by more than half the respondents.

It would thus seem that practitioners are their own worst enemies in sometimes being – and in other cases knowing or talking about – incapable and corrupt practitioners. The findings on corrupt and incapable practitioners are worrying as literature strongly argued for the benefit of the profession in observing a set of shared values and ethics (Nielsen, 2006; Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63; Seeger *et al.*, 2005a:139; Steiner, 2001:155). Furthermore professional bodies are also limited in their potential to enforce ethical practice (Motion & Leitch, 2005:50-51)

The vague definition of the function and its acknowledgement by practitioners may also contribute to their devaluing the profession.

7.7.2.4. Valuing their own profession

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statement regarding valuing their own profession for its contribution to organisational performance:

Table 7.48: Importance of valuing their own profession

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable		
44. The practitioner being ethical and adhering to professional values and norms	74.5	23.1	2.0	–	0.4	6.0	251	4.71

The ethical nature of the profession was acknowledged by respondents by their indication that being ethical was seen as of the utmost importance, with 74.5% rating it as *very important* and 23.1% rating it as *important*.

Respondents were also asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements on valuing the function and its role in their contribution to organisational performance.

Table 7.49: Valuing their own profession

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
23. I have a responsibility to give back to the profession by writing case studies, participating in talks at conferences, etc	8.1	33.5	36.7	10.5	5.2	6.0	248	3.30
21. In my career I could successfully educate management on what corporate communication entails	19.6	44.4	21.2	8.8	2.0	4.0	250	3.74

Although many respondents felt that they should give back to the profession (41.6%), only 8.1% *fully agreed* with the statement. Furthermore, 36.7% were *neutral* with 15.7% disagreeing and 6% not knowing. Thus there is no strong culture of giving back to the profession.

Most practitioners *fully agreed* (19.6%) and *mostly agreed* (44.4%) that they could *successfully educate management regarding what corporate communication entails*. The respondents rated themselves fairly successful in educating management in most, but not all cases.

In valuing the profession, practitioners placed a very high importance on being ethical. The respondents however, indicated that giving back to the profession and educating management, although important, were not nearly as important as being ethical. Respondents saw giving back to the profession as necessary, but might not favour doing it themselves. Educating management was seen as somewhat more important.

The above findings seem to contradict literature which suggested that corporate communication practitioners downplay the function (Spicer, 1997:36; Van Ruler, 1997:252).

7.7.2.5. International best practice knowledge

The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statement regarding knowledge of international best practice and its influence on contributing to organisational performance.

Table 7.50: International best practice knowledge

Statement	%						N	Mean
	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Fully disagree	Do not know		
18. Practitioners with knowledge of international best practice can contribute more to the organisation than those who do not have international best practice knowledge	20.2	39.5	25.0	9.3	2.0	4.0	248	3.69

More than half the respondents (59.7%) *fully* or *mostly agreed* that knowledge of international best practice would enable a practitioner to contribute more to the organisation. However, 25% were *neutral* on this issue, with 11.3% *disagreeing* and 4% indicating that they *did not know.* Some respondents, about 60%, thus see international best practice knowledge to be important, while others do not value it.

7.8. CONCLUSION REGARDING THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEVELS OF VARIABLES

Although the respondents were not asked to rank the variables against each other and therefore a true ranking order could not be established, comparing the mean scores for each level of variables did provide an indication of prioritisation. Industry variables have the highest mean score, while professional variables obtained the lowest mean score. All the levels however, could be considered important as all the means were above three (out of a possible five).

Table 7.51: Mean for the levels of variables

Variables level	Mean according to basic statistics
Industry-level	4.08
Individual-level	3.90
Country-level	3.77
Organisational-level	3.58
Professional-level	3.46

Similarly, the mean scores for each statement could be calculated and the statements prioritised according to this calculation.

This method of prioritising the statements and resulting levels is however oversimplified, and does not provide information on the relationship between the variables and can thus be argued to be of little value. For instance, the number of statements and the specifics of each statement are not taken into account. Therefore, an alternative method of determining the most important variables influencing practitioners was pursued. Structural equation modelling was applied to this end. This takes into consideration the strength of the impact of the variables, as well as the relationship between the variables, as described in chapter eight.

7.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a description of the quantitative data pertaining to the perceptions of respondents regarding the five levels of variables, as well as their perceptions on activities performed by practitioners, in contributing to organisational performance.

Through exploratory factor analysis it was found that the various statements pertaining to the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance could not be categorised into the five levels of variables. However, for theoretical purposes, the statements grouped under each level of variables were factor analysed and new constructs were identified and labelled. Thereafter, a discussion about the perceptions of the respondents followed.

When considering the skills necessary for the function, respondents indicated that specifically technical and strategic knowledge of the function and being proactive and

strategic, within the framework of having South African business knowledge, were important. Other aspects important to the practitioner in contributing to organisation performance included being ethical, and being visible in the organisation. Accreditation of the function was considered important, but not essential. Respondents indicated that sexual orientation and feminisation did not have a great influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, and also indicated that management appreciated the communication function. Respondents however, found balancing both the interests of the organisation and the stakeholders difficult.

Furthermore aspects such as stereotyping, sexual harassment, organisational politics, downsizing in economically difficult times, encroachment, and a lack of mentorship or internship were seen as aspects that could limit the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Regarding issues pertaining to race a few interesting discoveries were made. As expected, black respondents were more positive than white practitioners about affirmative action and its influence on their careers. Furthermore, affirmative action may have contributed to the practitioner landscape as an almost equal number of white and black respondents enact the three roles (pertaining to role to be performed and not quality of work). Interestingly, black respondents were more critical towards the use of BEE agencies or contracts.

When analysing the data per actual role performed by the respondents, two main correlations were found linking role with monthly income and the organisation's annual communication budget. However, as expected, more differences per role were found in the data. The main findings were that strategists seemed to hold a more moderate view of the various level variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, and that respondents were more aware of variables influencing them relating to the role that they performed.

The next chapter will conclude the quantitative findings of the study by offering advanced statistical analysis to answer specific research questions three and five. To this end statistical calculations to determine correlations and differentiations will be used, as well as structural equation modelling.

CHAPTER 8 ADVANCED STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reported the quantitative findings on the levels of variables, constructs within the levels of variables, and perceptions of respondents on the variables influencing practiitoners in contributing to organisational performance. This chapter will advance from the previous chapter by providing advanced statistical analysis to address two Specific research questions.

The first section of the chapter focuses on statistical correlations and differentiations with regard to respondents' *actual* role performed and the variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance, required to answer Specific research question three:

> ***Specific research question 3***
> *How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform?*

The second section of the chapter will then focus on structural equation modelling in order to answer Specific research question five:

> ***Specific research question 5***
> *What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?*

8.2. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA PER ACTUAL ROLE PERFORMED

The following section reports on the calculation of correlations and differentiations between the respondents' *actual* roles, and the various newly defined constructs making up the five levels of variables (as reported in sections 7.3 to 7.7). (The correlations between the data describing respondents and the *actual* role performed by the respondents, were discussed where applicable in chapter six.).

Cross-tabulations were calculated in order to assist with the identificiation of differentiation trends in the data. The practical significance of the various cross-tabulations calculated were found to be between small (w=0.1) and medium (w=0.3). One instance of a large statistical significance (p≤0.001) was found, and in three instances a small statistical significance (p≤0.05) can be reported (see table 8.1.).

Table 8.1: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Significant results

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Clear transition to a new position						(w=0.34) (p=0.001)
Technician	31.7	33.7	28.8	1.9*	3.8*	104
Manager	20.0	49.3	9.3	17.3	4.0*	75
Strategist	26.5	41.2	20.6	8.8*	2.9*	34
Having the right skills set						(w=0.15) (p=0.014)
Technician	0.0*	0.0*	0.0*	33.9	66.1	127
Manager	1.2*	0.0*	0.0*	35.7	63.1	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	0.0*	51.4	48.6	35
Personal characteristics as constraints						(w=0.26) (p=0.037)
Technician	3.2*	21.0	55.6	15.3	4.8	124
Manager	0.0*	36.9	52.4	9.5	1.2*	84
Strategist	6.1*	18.2	48.5	24.2	3.0*	33

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Multilingualism						(w=0.27) (p=0.022)
Technician	0.8*	17.9	30.1	23.6	27.6	123
Manager	1.2*	8.3	40.5	31.0	19.0	84
Strategist	3.0*	6.1*	21.2	51.5	18.2	33

** Count for these cells is less than 5.*

The cross-tabulation for making a *clear transition to a new position* indicates a statistically significant difference between the three roles (p=0.001) and a medium practical significance (w=0.34). This table shows that making a *clear transition to a new position* seems to be more important to managers than for strategists and technicians, although none of the three roles felt very strong about the importance of this variable.

The three variables where small statistically significant differences were found between different roles (with small to medium practical significance), are:

- *having the right skills set* (p=0.014; w=0.15);
- *personal characteristics as constraints* (p=0.037; w=0.26); and
- *multilingualism* (p=0.022; w=0.27).

When considering *having the right skills set* it would seem that managers and technicians viewed this variable as *very important* or *fully agreed*, while strategists were more moderate in their opinion indicating *important* or *mostly agree*. Managers, in turn, viewed *personal characteristics* as variables influencing practitioners as less important than strategists and technicians. Strategists viewed this variable as more important than technicians. Although the majority indicated it as important, strategists viewed *multilingualism* as much more important than the managers and technicians did.

Although the rest of the cross-tabulations calculated small to medium practical significance for differences between roles, their statistical significance proved less than satisfactory (see the following tables). However, a statistically non-significant result should not be interpreted as “no difference between means” (Cohen, in Field, 2005:28), as it could prove to deliver similar, but statistically significant results for another sample with more respondents per role performed. Also, since this is the first data available on the differences between actual role

performed and the variables influencing practitioners' in contribution to organisational performance, and it did show some practical significance, the trends in the data should at least be considered. The results will be discussed per level of variable and then according to the role performed by the respondents.

- **Individual-level**

Various trends were identified when examining the differences between respondents performing each of the three corporate communication roles and their opinions on individual-level variables. When considering *viewing corporate communication as a strategic function* and the *importance of a stereotype free environment*, it would seem that strategists were more moderate in their opinions compared to managers and technicians. Although the majority of the strategists indicated these variables as important, they feel less strongly about them, compared to managers and technicians. Managers in turn, felt stronger about the importance of these variables than technicians.

However, on the *existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession,* strategists held the strongest sentiments on its existence, while technicians seem to be least exposed to this constraint. With regard to *feminisation,* around 45% of respondents performing all three communication roles seemed to agree that this variable is very important. However, noticeably more strategists rated *feminisation* as unimportant or only somewhat important – indicating that they felt less strongly about this variable. The strategists, however, viewed being a *cultural advocate for stakeholders*, the *view of job limitations* and *international experience* as more important than the managers and technicians did.

Table 8.2: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Individual-level

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function						(w=0.20) (p=0.132)
Technician	0.0*	0.0*	3.1*	45.7	51.2	127
Manager	0.0*	0.0*	3.6*	32.1	64.3	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	5.7*	60.0	34.3	35

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Importance of a stereotype free environment						(w=0.18) (p=0.629)
Technician	1.6*	2.4*	8.8	34.4	52.8	125
Manager	1.2*	1.2*	6.0	36.9	54.8	84
Strategist	2.9*	0.0*	8.8*	55.9	32.4	34
Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession						(w=0.20) (p=0.476)
Technician	1.6*	14.8	58.2	19.7	5.7	122
Manager	0.0*	16.7	50.0	31.0	2.4*	84
Strategist	2.9*	14.7	50.0	20.6	11.8*	34
Feminisation						(w=0.15) (p=0.518)
Technician	0.0*	8.1	12.9	34.7	44.4	124
Manager	1.2*	7.3	11.0	34.1	46.3	82
Strategist	0.0*	9.4*	21.9	21.9	46.9	32
Cultural advocate for stakeholders						(w=0.21) (p=0.279)
Technician	0.0*	4.8	44.8	40.8	9.6	125
Manager	0.0*	6.0	46.4	44.0	3.6*	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	26.5	61.8	11.8*	34
View on job limitations						(w=0.20) (p=0.133)
Technician	2.4*	17.6	33.6	28.0	18.4	125
Manager	4.9*	24.4	32.9	24.4	13.4	82
Strategist	8.8*	17.6	20.6	41.2	11.8*	34
International experience						(w=0.15) (p=0.722)
Technician	5.0	20.2	31.1	31.9	11.8	119
Manager	6.0	20.2	27.4	33.3	13.1	84
Strategist	0.0*	10.7*	28.6	50.0	10.7*	28

** Count for these cells is less than 5.*

- **Organisational-level**

The differences between respondents' actual roles and their opinions on organisational-level variables, delivered a few insightful trends. *Capacity building (internship)* was rated as very important by more technicians than both managers and strategists. No clear differentiation could be detected for the importance of a *proactive role of the function* or *management's age*.

The strategists seemed to have more moderate views of the constructs *status of corporate communication within the organisation, relationship with the dominant coalition,* and *relating to stakeholders*, while more managers and technicians viewed these variables as very important. Strategists, however, were more neutral. Less strategists were negative than the managers and technicians, about the *security of the communication function in the organisation.*

More strategists viewed the effect of *organisational size* on the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance as not important at all, than managers or technicians. *Targeted media use* was viewed as more important by managers and less so by technicians, and even less important by strategists.

Table 8.3: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Organisational-level

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Capacity building (internship)						(w=0.20) (p=0.281)
Technician	7.4	24.6	31.1	21.3	15.6	122
Manager	1.2*	30.9	33.3	25.9	8.6	81
Strategist	8.8*	20.6	41.2	23.5	5.9*	34
Proactive role of the function						(w=0.14) (p=0.634)
Technician	0.0*	5.5	37.8	44.9	11.8	127
Manager	1.2*	3.6*	38.6	45.8	10.8	83
Strategist	0.0*	11.4*	34.3	42.9	11.4*	35

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Management's age						(w=0.18) (p=0.676)
Technician	8.0	15.2	34.4	31.2	11.2	125
Manager	10.8	16.9	26.5	39.8	6.0	83
Strategist	14.3	5.7*	31.4	34.3	14.3	35
Status of corporate communication within the organisation						(w=0.23) (p=0.257)
Technician	0.0*	0.0*	7.9	44.9	47.2	127
Manager	0.0*	0.0*	4.8	57.1	38.1	84
Strategist	0.0*	2.9*	11.4*	60.0	25.7	35
Relationship with the dominant coalition						(w=0.21) (p=0.301)
Technician	0.0*	0.0*	12.6	54.3	33.1	127
Manager	0.0*	1.2*	2.4*	66.7	29.8	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	14.3	62.9	22.9	35
Relating to stakeholders						(w=0.19) (p=0.434)
Technician	0.8*	10.2	44.9	35.4	8.7	127
Manager	0.0*	8.4	54.2	28.9	8.4	83
Strategist	0.0*	14.3*	65.7	17.1	2.9*	35
Security of the communication function in the organisation						(w=0.14) (p=0.270)
Technician	4.0	20.6	38.1	31.7	5.6	126
Manager	2.4*	20.2	44.0	28.6	4.8*	84
Strategist	0.0*	11.1*	52.8	30.6	5.6*	36
Organisational size						(w=0.29) (p=0.066)
Technician	18.9	11.5	56.6	11.5	1.6*	122
Manager	13.8	33.8	41.3	7.5	3.8*	80
Strategist	25.8	16.1	48.4	9.7*	0.0	31

Role	%					n
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Targeted media use						(w=0.25) (p=0.095)
Technician	4.5	0.9*	16.1	39.3	39.3	112
Manager	2.6*	6.5	10.4	28.6	51.9	77
Strategist	3.4*	6.9*	27.6	27.6	34.5	29

**Count for these cells is less than 5.*

- **Industry-level**

Since the industry-level variables were considered a single construct as per the factor analysis (see section 7.5.1.), the differences between respondents performing each of the three corporate communication roles and their opinions on industry-level variables as a whole was calculated. The results seem to indicate a trend that technicians were more varied in their opinions – from *somewhat important* / *neutral* to *very important* / *fully agree* – in comparison with the managers and strategists. The strategists once again tended to be more moderate in their opinions than the managers and technicians, as less strategists opted for the most positive end of the scale. This could be due to the fact that technicians may not have enough experience or knowledge on their industry environment.

Table 8.4: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Industry-level

Role	%					N
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Industry-level variables						(w=0.22) (p=0.128)
Technician	0.0*	0.0*	18.3	50.8	31.0	126
Manager	0.0*	0.0*	4.8*	60.37	34.5	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	5.7	68.6	25.7	35

**Count for these cells is less than 5.*

- **Country-level**

When examining the differences between respondents performing each of the three corporate communication roles and their opinions on country-level variables, a similar trend than before emerged. Corporate communication strategists had a more moderate view of the county-level variables *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* and *sense of security,* than both technicians and managers. Managers and technicians felt stronger about the importance of these two constructs than the strategists. The only difference is that, while the majority in all three roles viewed the *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* as important or very important, the majority of the strategists felt neutral about a *sense of security*, while their counterparts viewed this variable as important.

Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands was considered more neutral or less unimportant by the respondents. Strategists viewed it as more unimportant than managers and technicians, once again displaying a more moderate view.

Table 8.5: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Country-level

Role	%					N
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges						(w=0.19) (p=0.170)
Technician	0.0*	0.8*	9.4	51.2	38.6	127
Manager	0.0*	0.0*	4.8*	59.5	35.7	84
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	14.3	68.6	17.1	35
Sense of security						(w=0.28) (p=0.119)
Technician	1.6*	8.0	24.8	51.2	14.4	125
Manager	0.0*	13.1	22.6	46.4	17.9	84
Strategist	0.0*	5.9*	55.9	23.5	14.7	34
Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands						(w=0.25) (p=0.056)
Technician	7.0	24.6	35.1	28.1	5.3	114
Manager	9.9	25.9	48.1	9.9	6.2	81
Strategist	6.3*	31.3	34.4	15.6	12.5*	32

**Count for these cells is less than 5.*

- **Professional-level**

The following cross-tabulation between the opinions of respondents on the professional-level variables and the actual role performed by the respondents indicated that for both *accreditation* and *visible leadership in the profession* strategists views were more moderate than those of the technicians and managers, even though all three roles viewed these variables as important. With regard to *practitioners harming the function* strategists rated this variable as less important than respondents enacting the other two roles. Although *international best practice knowledge* was rated as important by strategists, they did not opt for the most positive end of the scale to the same extent as managers and technicians did.

On *visible leadership in the profession*, the technicians felt the strongest, followed by the managers. When considering *practitioners harming the function* it would seem that managers felt strongest about this issue. On *valuing their own profession*, strategists and technicians indicated it as *important* / *mostly agree*, while managers, in this instance, held a more moderate view. However it also indicated once again that strategists held a slightly more moderate view than managers and technicians.

Table 8.6: Opinions of respondents per actual role as a percentage: Professional-level

Role	%					N
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Accreditation						(w=0.25) (p=0.852)
Technician	1.6*	4.0	21.4	54.0	19.0	126
Manager	3.8*	15.2	24.1	41.8	15.2	79
Strategist	0.0*	6.1*	36.4	39.4	18.2	33
Visible leadership in the profession						(w=0.18) (p=0.061)
Technician	0.0*	2.4*	39.4	55.9	2.4*	127
Manager	0.0*	1.2*	46.9	46.9	4.9*	81
Strategist	0.0*	0.0*	61.8	35.3	2.9*	34

Role	%					N
	Not important at all / Fully disagree	Unimportant / Mostly disagree	Somewhat important / Neutral	Important / Mostly agree	Very important / Fully agree	
Practitioners harming the function						(w=0.17) (p=0.095)
Technician	17.5	42.9	30.2	8.7	0.8*	126
Manager	11.3	33.8	42.5	10.0	2.5*	80
Strategist	20.6	32.4	38.2	5.9*	2.9*	34
International best practice knowledge						(w=0.22) (p=0.401)
Technician	0.8*	9.2	23.3	43.3	23.3	120
Manager	3.8*	12.8	30.8	34.6	17.9	78
Strategist	0.0*	3.1*	28.1	56.3	12.5*	32
Valuing their own profession						(w=0.18) (p=0.094)
Technician	0.0*	1.6*	13.4	71.7	13.4	127
Manager	0.0*	1.2*	27.2	55.6	16.0	81
Strategist	0.0*	2.9*	17.6	61.8	17.6	34

**Count for these cells is less than 5.*

8.2.1. Synopsis on Differentiations According to Role

When considering the trends discussed above, it would seem that corporate communication strategists, in general, seem to hold a more moderate view of the various level variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, than both technicians and managers.

This trend should be considered, since it relates back to the fact that the strategist had to constantly scan the environment and stay abreast of issues and their consequences for the organisation on the macro level (Grunig, 2001:6; Steyn, 2003a:23-24; 2007:139, 141, 146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17, 20). This focus of their role may actually assist them to view the variables influencing the practitioner within the framework of the bigger macro / strategic picture of how practitioners can contribute to organisational performance within their various contexts. The ability of strategists thus to see the *bigger picture* within their work environment, might also assist them in obtaining a more balanced view of the profession, and the influences on it. This would coincide with Steyn and Puth's suggestion (2000:19) that

the public relations strategist, in its intermediary function, has to "hold a degree of detachment from the motives that drive other …" organisational managers.

Strategists, however, viewed the constructs of the *existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession,* being a *cultural advocate for stakeholders*, the *view of job limitations, international experience, multilingualism* and *valuing their own profession*, as more important than managers and technicians did. Once again, these concepts of importance to strategists can be related back to their role as boundary-spanner and liaison between the organisation and stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19), which assists the organisation in adapting to changes in the environment (Warnaby & Moss, 1997:13) (see section 2.2.4.2.1.).

Corporate communication managers in turn viewed the constructs of a *clear transition to a new position, targeted media use* and *practitioners harming the function* as more important than strategists and technicians. They also held a moderate view, compared to the strategists and technicians, on the influence of *valuing their own profession* on the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. Once again, the aspects considered important by managers relate closely to their managerial tasks of managing the activities of corporate communication practitioners and the corporate communication department (Everett, 2006:102-103; Steyn, 2007:140-141), while formulating strategies and plans for messages to be communicated outside the organisation at the meso level (functional, departmental or divisional level) (Steyn, 2000c:31; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20; see section 2.2.4.2.2.). While managing these tasks one can also understand that they were extremely focussed and have not been particularly concerned about professional-level variables.

Corporate communication technicians seemed to focus more on *personal characteristics as constraints, capacity building* and *visible leadership in the profession*, while being more varied in their opinions regarding industry-level variables, in comparison with managers and strategists. As with the strategist and managerial roles, these findings coincide with the role played by the technician, as technicians are not involved in decision-making (Steyn, 2000c:26; 2007:147) and, therefore, look to the corporate communication manager and strategist for leadership. At the micro level where the technician operates, it is also understandable that personal characteristics play an important role. This is the case as technicians have to engage on a individual-level with stakeholders in order to generate communication products and implement the plans made by others, using skills such as

writing, editing, producing audiovisual messages, and creating graphics, to align the communication activities of various departments (Steyn, 2000c:26; 2007:147).

On the concepts of *proactive role of the function* and *management's age* no clear differentiation could be detected, indicating that respondents performing all three roles seemed to agree on the importance of these variables to the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. To some degree the respondents also concurred on the importance of *feminisation.* This could be explained by the fact that the feminisation of the profession (see section 3.4.1.3.), corporate communication enacting a proactive role (see section 3.8.4.4.) and *management's age* (see section 3.5.3.5.), can all be seen as more general variables influencing the practitioners.

In summary, it can thus be suggested that variables pertaining to the specific role performed by practitioners, will mostly affect their views on the variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

8.3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VARIABLES INFLUENCING PRACTITIONERS

The semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to determine respondents' perceptions of variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance. The analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, as reported in chapters five, six and seven, explained how South African practitioners viewed these variables. However, it could not explain in detail the relationships between the variables, nor prioritise the variables.

Therefore, more advanced statistical analysis was needed to determine the relationship between the variables. For that reason, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to build a model of the variables influencing the practitioner and thereby explaining the relationship between these variables, in order to answer Specific research question five:

Specific research question 5

What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?

8.3.1. Building a Model to Indicate the Relationship Between Variables

SEM (as explained in section 4.3.4.8.5.) offers a method of constructing a model which organises and can indicate some pattern or relationship between the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. In order to construct this model, the data from the questionnaire findings were statistically analysed, with cognisance of the interview and literature findings, and practical application of the variables influencing the practitioner.

Once again it is important to note that an SEM model is not suggested as the *only* or *ultimate* model, but as *a suggestion of a model* that fitted the data gathered in this study.

In order to determine the succesfull fit of the model to the data, goodness-of-fit indexes were used. For the purposes of this study both the Comparitive Fit Index (CFI) and RMSEA were used (see section 4.3.4.8.5.). In summary:

- A CFI of 0.9 is considered a good fit and a CFI of 1 a perfect fit (Garson, 2009; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al*., 2006:747; Nortje, 2003:24-25).
- The RMSEA value should ideally be below 0.10 and the closer to 0, the better the fit. A value of 0.08 can be considered a reasonable fit (Byrne, 2001:85; Campbell, 2003:9; Garson, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 2006:748). The associated confidence interval for RMSEA should be between 0 and 0.08, with a narrower confidence interval indicating good precision in the model fit to the population (Byrne, 2001:85).

However, it was cautioned that the goodness-of-fit indices should be interpreted, whilst keeping the practical and theoretical applicability of the model in mind, when determining a model's usefulness (Byrne, 2001:88; Hair *et al.*, 2006:751).

In constructing the models, the re-categorised constructs per level, as defined by the factor analysis discussed in chapter seven, were used.

In a first attempt all the concepts pertaining to each construct and all constructs pertaining to each level of variables were included in the model. However the SEM process indicated that some constructs (statements or groups of statements) were found not to be important contributors to the levels of variables within this model, and they were therefore omitted, while the most important statements or constructs pertaining to each level were kept in the models. This is a method used to reduce the complexity of the model (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:509).

The constructs omitted included:

- on the individual-level:
    - viewing corporate communication as a technical function
    - existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession
    - personal characteristics as constraints
    - feminisation
    - view on job limitations
    - international experience
    - multilinguilism
    - clear transition to a new position
- on the organisational-level
    - status of corporate comunication within the organisation
    - organisational size
    - capacity building
    - targeted media use

No constructs from the industry, country or professional-levels were omitted.

For ease of reference, table 8.7. indicates the statements pertaining to each construct, and the constructs pertaining to each level of influences used in the models reported.

Table 8.7: Constructs used in the models reported

Statement number	Statement
Individual-level	
Having the right skill set	
33.10	The practitioner having good listening skills
33.11	The practitioner having conflict management skills (ability to disagree constructively)
33.12	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the corporate communication arena
33.13	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the general business arena
33.9	The practitioner having verbal communication skills, presentation / speaking skills
33.5	The practitioner having good networking skills
33.6	The practitioner having clear career goals
33.8	The practitioner having general writing skills

Statement number	Statement
33.4	The practitioner being able to apply knowledge gained to the situation at hand
33.7	The practitioner being computer literate
33.3	The practitioner having strategic communication knowledge
33.2	The practitioner having basic communication theory knowledge
Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function	
33.47	The practitioner viewing corporate communication as a strategic function
33.40	The practitioner viewing corporate communication as important
33.1	The practitioner having business knowledge
33.33	The practitioner taking an active role in the business
33.50	The practitioner identifying new opportunities for communication
Importance of a stereotype free environment	
33.35	The practitioner not being stereotyped according to gender
33.34	The practitioner not being stereotyped according to race
Cultural advocate for stakeholders	
33.24	The practitioner acting as an advocate on behalf of stakeholders
33.23	The practitioner acting as an advisor / early warning system to management
33.29	The practitioner being able to act as an cultural interpreter within the organisation and between the organisation and its stakeholders
33.28	The practitioner having a particular cultural background
Organisational-level	
Management's age	
30.6	Younger managers know more about corporate communication than older managers (45+)
30.7	Younger managers tend to be more open to new ideas than older managers (45+)
Security of the communication function in the organisation	
30.20	I have experienced encroachment (people from other disciplines being appointed in communication positions) in the communication department
30.10	The corporate communication department is always the first to be downsized in difficult economic times
30.15	I am satisfied in my current position
30.14	I have had ample advancement opportunities within the communication profession
Relating to stakeholders	
30.30	When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function in this organisation is frank / open about the organisation and its stakeholders' perceptions towards each other

Statement number	Statement
30.31	When dealing with corporate social responsibility, the communication function includes as many as possible stakeholder's opinions and views
30.39	In this organisation traditional media (storytelling, industrial theatre) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees or communities
30.8	In this organisation management often tend to take credit for the job done by the communication professional
Relationship with the dominant coalition	
33.15	Practitioners and management having shared expectations of the role of corporate communication
33.16	The practitioner being aware of, but not participating in organisational politics
33.18	Management viewing corporate communication as important
33.20	The practitioner having direct contact with the CEO / Managing director
30.9	Having a higher formal qualification than your manager presents a problem in the communication environment
Proactive role of the function	
30.36	In this organisation the communication practitioners identify new opportunities for communication, rather than responding to events with communication
30.35	In this organisation management appreciates the function / role / scope of corporate communication
30.37	In this organisation the communication practitioners are instructed, rather than suggesting actions
30.38	In this organisation electronic media (internet, intranet, web pages, sms) are used to communicate with stakeholders such as employees, clients or suppliers
30.13	Organisational politics has had a negative influence on my possible contribution to organisational performance
Industry-level	
33.31	The practitioner understanding the importance of corporate social responsibility to the organisation's performance
33.38	Practitioners knowing how and with whom to lobby
33.32	The practitioner understanding the principles of the King II report
33.30	The practitioner being sensitive to involve all necessary stakeholders in a certain issue
Country-level	
Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges	
33.39	Practitioners knowing different cultural protocols and/or being able to frame messages for different cultural stakeholders
33.26	The practitioner being open to the challenges and changes in South Africa
33.48	The practitioner having knowledge of South African media legislation i.e. freedom of speech, slander legislation etc

Statement number	Statement
33.36	Practitioners knowing how to deal / communicate with both literate and illiterate stakeholders
33.27	The practitioner having experience of working in South Africa
Sense of security	
30.22	Practitioners with close ties to people from certain political parties have the opportunity to make more contributions to organisational performance
30.26	I have job security in my current position
Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands	
30.43	Using BEE agencies / contracts to fulfill corporate communication tasks limits the contribution of corporate communication to organisational performance
30.44	In my organisation we have to deal with activist publics regularly
Professional-level	
Accreditation	
30.16	Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner in making contributions to organisational performance
30.17	Formal accreditation of the profession would assist the practitioner with acknowledgement in the organisation
33.49	The corporate communication function being accredited (when this could happen)
Visible leadership in the profession	
33.43	The practitioner belonging to a professional organisation
33.17	The practitioner attempting to educate management on the importance of corporate communication
33.14	The practitioner speaking out about their success in the workplace
33.42	The practitioner being very visible in the organisation
30.32	In my career I had to continually defend / advocate the communication function to top management
Practitioners harming the function	
30.29	I have come across corrupt corporate communication practitioners in my career
30.28	I have come across incapable practitioners in my career
30.25	The vague definition of corporate communication hinders practitioners in contributing to organisation performance
Valuing their own profession	
33.44	The practitioner being ethical and adhering to professional values and norms
30.23	I have a responsibility to give back to the profession by writing case studies, participating in talks at conferences, etc
30.21	In my career I could successfully educate management on what corporate communication entails

Statement number	Statement
International best practice knowledge	
30.18	Practitioners with knowledge of international best practice can contribute more to the organisation than those who do not have international best practice knowledge

The symbols used in the model consist of the following (see section section 4.3.4.8.5.) (Byrne, 2001:8-9; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:714-716; StatSoft Inc., 2008; Stoelting, 2002;):

- Ovals indicate constructs (latent variables), with other words the levels of variables.
- The rectangular boxes represent constructs (observed variables). The newly categorised constructs (see section 7.2. – 7.7.) are used in the construction of the models.
- Straight lines with single arrowheads, from the ovals to the rectangles, indicate the impact of one variable on another, in other words regression coefficients. The appropriate measurement is indicated by the *b*-value.
- Curved lines with arrowheads on both sides, located between the ovals, indicate the correlation between these constructs. The measurements are indicated by the r-value.
- A small circle with an *e*, indicates that there will always be some measurement error observed for any particular concept.

The models will now be discussed.

8.3.1.1. SEM Model 1

Figure 8.1 represents the first model developed by using SEM.

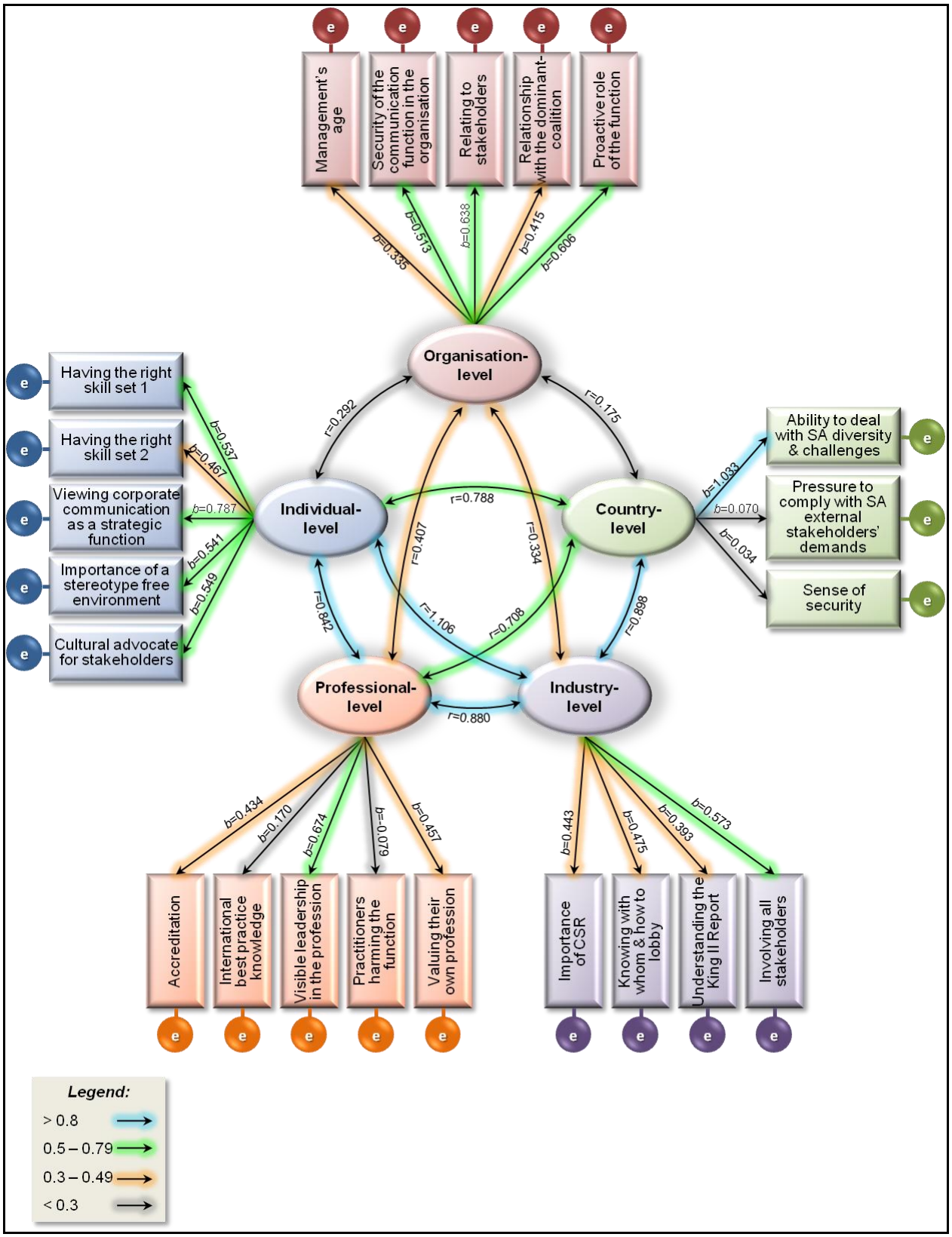


Figure 8.1: SEM Model One

8.3.1.1.1. Model one fit

The model obtained a CFI of 0.739, which indicates a fair fit (Garson, 2009; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747; Nortje, 2003:24-25).

The RMSEA for this model is 0.084, with a lower confidence limit of 0.076 and a higher limit of 0.092. These limits indicate a very narrow confidence interval. Together with the RMSEA value and narrow confidence interval, the model can be considered a good fit to the population.

Furthermore, taking the comments by Byrne (2001:88) and Hair *et al.* (2006:751) into consideration, this model makes theoretical and practical sense and together with the RMSEA, it can therefore be considered useful. In addition, considering that this is the first model attempting to include all the possible variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, the model fit can be considered satisfactory.

8.3.1.1.2. Interpretation of model one

The strenghts of the correlations reported in model one can be divided into four groups as indicated by the colour coding in the model. For instance, the strongest correlations are marked in blue and indicate an r-value>0.8, with the next level being green, followed by orange and then grey.

Most levels of variables are highly correlated. There is, for instance, strong correlations between individual and professional; individual and industry; professional and industry; and industry and country-level variables. In other words, the stronger the one level of variables (for instance individual-level) were, the stronger the correlated level of variables will also be (for instance professional-level), and vice versa.

The weakest correlations are those between the organisation and individual-level; and organisation and country-level. Therefore, as organisational influences increase, so will individual, country and industry-level variables also increase and vice versa, but to a much smaller extent than with the stronger correlations indicated earlier.

In total, thus, one can see that organisational-level variables, except for their correlation with professional and industry-level variables, have a very weak correlation with other levels of variables. This could indicate that organisational-level variables are somewhat removed, or

more independent than the other levels of variables. It might also point to the fact that practitioners have little influence on the organisational-level variables. In turn, individual, professional and industry-level variables have very strong correlations with each other, indicating their interrelatedness in influencing the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

When multiplying the correlation coefficients, it is possible to see that individual-level variables have a stronger correlation with organisational-level variables through professional-level influences (0.842x0.0.407=0.343) or even industry-level variables (1.106x0.334=0.369), than directly (0.292). This correlation is, however, still fairly weak. Individual-level variables' correlation with organisational-level variables does not become stronger when the correlation of individual-level variables with organisational-level variables via country-level variables is considered.

Country-level variables also show a stronger correlation with organisational-level variables when considered through individual (0.788x0.292=0.230), professional (0.708x0.407=0.288) and industry (0.898x0.334=0.300) level variables. All these correlations are, however, still considered relatively weak. Thus it would seem that country-level variables is directly related to individual, professional or industry-level variables, which are then in turn related to organisational-level variables.

When considering the individual-level variables, it was indicated (through factor analysis in the SEM process) that the construct *having the right skills set* had to be divided into two separate concepts, namely *having the right skills set one* and *having the right skills set two*. Table 8.8 explains how the statements relating to the construct were split.

Table 8.8: Splitting the construct of having the right skills set

Statement number	Statement
Individual-level	
Having the right skills set 1	
33.10	The practitioner having good listening skills
33.11	The practitioner having conflict management skills (ability to disagree constructively)
33.12	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the corporate communication arena
33.13	The practitioner staying up to date with trends and new developments in the general business arena

Statement number	Statement
33.9	The practitioner having verbal communication skills, presentation / speaking skills
33.5	The practitioner having good networking skills
33.6	The practitioner having clear career goals
Having the right skills set 2	
33.8	The practitioner having general writing skills
33.4	The practitioner being able to apply knowledge gained to the situation at hand
33.7	The practitioner being computer literate
33.3	The practitioner having strategic communication knowledge
33.2	The practitioner having basic communication theory knowledge

Assessing te strenght of the contribution of different constructs on the individual level, it can be seen that four of the constructs contribute fairly strongly to this level. The construct, *having the right skills set two*, contributed the least to the individual-level. The concept *viewing corporate communication as a strategic function* most strongly contributes to the individual-level, although the remaining three constructs also contribute to the level. This would indicate that pertaining to the individual-level, the *practitioners' view of the corporate communication function as a strategic function*, will have the strongest influence or impact on their contribution to organisational performance. This finding is in agreement with literature that suggested that the practitioner should perform the strategic role in order to contribute most to organisational performance (ref. Grunig, 2001:6,8; Moss *et al.*, 2000:301; Bütschi & Steyn, 2006:106-109; Grunig, 2001:9; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20; Steyn, 2003b:23-24; 2000c:29-30; 2004:71; 2007:146). The model however goes one step further, not only in arguing that the practitioner should perform the strategic role, but also that the practitioner should view the function as strategic. One can argue that the function needs to be viewed as strategic, before the practitioner is even able to perform a strategic role.

Three of the five contructs fairly strongly contribute to organisational-level variables, namely *relating to stakeholders, security of the communication function in the organisation* and *proactive role of the function*.

The concept of *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* is the strongest variable on the country-level. *Sense of security* and *pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands* has a trivial influence on this level.

All four statements pertaining to industry-level variables, fairly strongly contribute to this level. The statement *the practitioner being sensitive to involve all necessary stakeholders in a certain issue*, proved to have the strongest impact on this level.

One of the five constructs, *providing visible leadership in the profession*, most strongly contributes to the professional-level. However, the two concepts of *valuing their own profession* and *accreditation* should not be ignored. *International best practice knowledge* makes a very small contribution to the level and can thus be considered a weak indicator of professional-level variables. In addition the regression value of the construct *practitioners harming the function* is negative. This indicates that practitioners should not harm the function, as this will negatively influence the professional-level, and ultimately their contribution to organisational performance.

8.3.1.1.3. Suggestions from model one

The following suggestions can be made from model one:

- All the levels of variables, except, to some extent, the organisational-level variables, are so highly correlated, that it would seem that they can almost be considered as one large group and not separate levels of variables. However, each of the level's impact on contributing to organisational performance, is not yet known and needs to be investigated.
- Individual, professional, industry – and to some extent country – level variables are central in the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.
- Organisational-level variables mainly influence the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance via one of the other levels of influence, most probably through individual or industry-level variables.
- The practitioner must view corporate communication as strategic in order to contribute to organisational performance through individual-level variables.
- *Having the right skills set* – an individual-level influence – were indicated to be divided into two separate concepts, namely *having the right skills set one* and *having the right skills set two*.
- On the organisational-level, the concepts of *security of the communication function in the organisation*, *relating to stakeholders* and the *proactive role of the function* mainly determine this level.
- *Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* mainly determines the country-level.

- The concepts of *accreditation*, *visible leadership in the profession* and *valuing their own profession*, mainly determine the professional-level.

Taking these suggestions into consideration, the second SEM model was developed.

8.3.1.2. Model two

Figure 8.2 represents the second SEM model.

8.3.1.2.1. Model two fit

Model two obtained a CFI of 0.833, which indicates a better fit than model one (ref. Garson, 2009; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747; Nortje, 2003:24-25).

The RMSEA for this model is 0.085, with a lower confidence limit of 0.072 and a higher limit of 0.097. Once again, these limits indicate a very narrow confidence interval. The RMSEA for model two is very close to that of model one.

Therefore, together with the goodness-of-fit indexes and because the model makes theoretical and practical sense, the model fit can be considered satisfactory (ref. Byrne, 2001:88; Hair *et al.*, 2006:751).

8.3.1.2.2. Interpretation of model two

In this model the impact of each level of variables on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance was tested. The individual, country, industry and professional-level variables are all shown to be of utmost importance, with very high regression values. Organisational-level variables have a low impact or weak influence on the contribution that the practitioner can make to organisational performance.

In model two, only the constructs shown in model one to be of great importance to each level of variables, were taken into account. The most important constructs for each of the levels of variables is also clear, and is similar to that found in model one, namely:

- *Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function* for the individual-level variables
- *Proactive role of the function* for the organisational-level variables
- *Involving all stakeholders* for the industry-level variables
- *Visible leadership in the profession* for professional-level variables

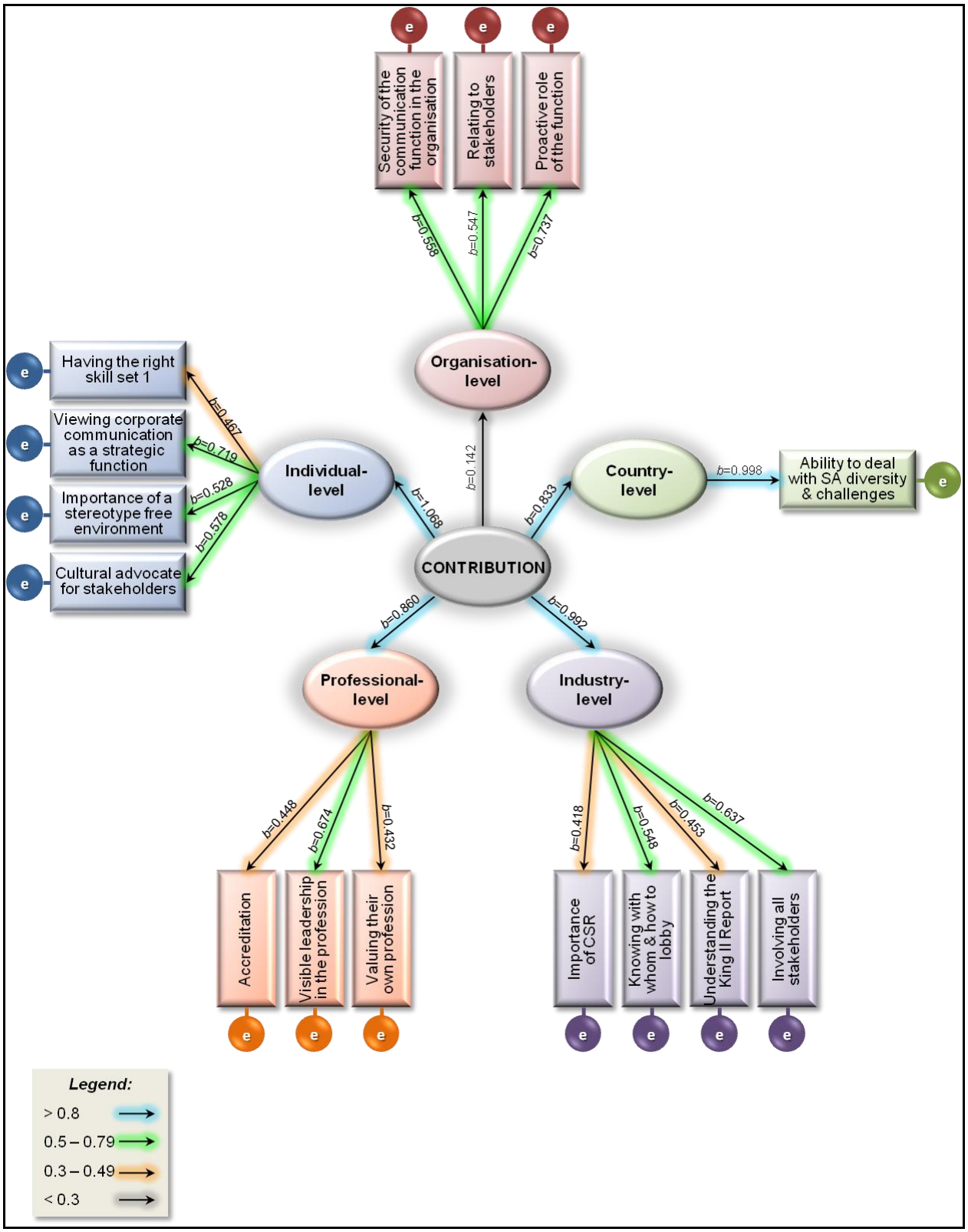


Figure 8.2: SEM Model two

From the model it is clear that *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* represent the country-level variables.

8.3.1.2.3. Suggestions from model two

The following suggestions can be made from model two:

- Organisational-level variables are a weak indicator of practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. The most important construct to be mentioned under organisational-level is the *proactive role of the function*. Referring back to model one, one can argue that the organisational-level variables influence the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance through either the individual or industry-level variables.
- Individual, professional and industry-level variables are a strong indicator of practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. Country-level – specifically, the construct of *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* – also strongly indicates practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

Further SEM analysis was conducted to take into account the suggestions from model two and to improve further on this model. Therefore, a third model was attempted.

8.3.1.3. Model three

Figure 8.3 represents the third model developed by using SEM.

8.3.1.3.1. Model three fit

Model three obtained the best CFI of all the models, namely a CFI of 0.943, which indicates a particularly good fit (Garson, 2009; Grunig, *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747-749; Nortje, 2003:24-25).

The RMSEA for this model is 0.058, with a lower confidence limit of 0.037 and a higher limit of 0.079. Once again, this goodness of fit measure is almost ideal, and a great improvement on the previous models' RMSEA as it is far less than 0.10. Furthermore, the confidence limits should be close to 0 and less than 0.08 for a well-fitting model with a 90% confidence limit (ref. Byrne, 2001:85, 88; Hair *et al.*, 2006:751).

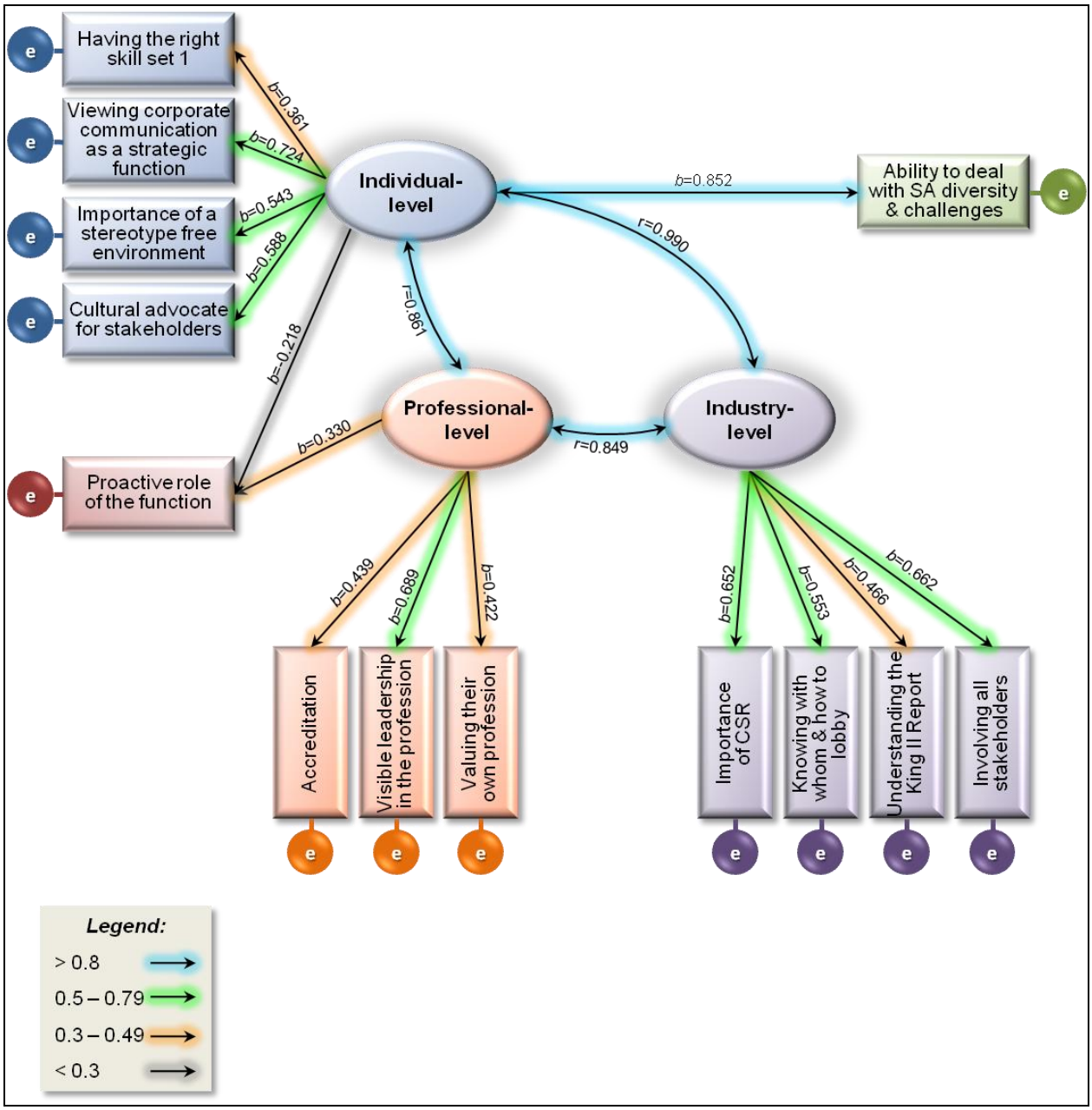


Figure 8.3: SEM Model three

Therefore, by taking the good goodness-of-fit results into consideration, plus the fact that this model makes theoretical and practical sense, the model can be considered the most useful of the three models.

8.3.1.3.2. Interpretation of model three

Model three indicates that the constructs *proactive role of the function* and *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges*, represent the organisational and country-levels respectively. In addition *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* are related

directly to the individual-level as indicated by the high regression value. Similarly, the *proactive role of the function* then relates to both the individual and professional-levels.

From the model it can be deduced that the individual, professional and industry-levels are very highly correlated. This implies that a change in any of these levels of variables, will lead to a change in the other. Therefore, if a practitioner can increase the individual-level variables' positive influence on their contribution to organisational performance, the other levels of variables will also increase their positive influence on their contribution to organisational performance. However, the reverse is also true.

In practice, this implies that when a practitioner has the *right skills set*, *views communication as a strategic function*, is not stereotyped, acts as a *cultural advocate for stakeholders* and has the *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges, s*/he will be able to contribute to organisational performance from an individual-level. Interestingly, the r-value indicates that *proactive role of the function* is seen as a variable that can negatively influence the practitioner on the individual-level.
Therefore, when the individual-level variables are optimised, it will also positively impact on the professional and industry-levels. For instance, practitioners will provide *visible leadership in their profession* and show that they *value their own profession*. *Accreditation* will also become a greater possibility. Since the construct the *proactive role of the function* has an impact on the professional-level, enhancing the *proactive role of the function* in an organisation will also strengthen the impact of industry and individual level variables, as a result of the strong links between these levels of variables[22]. Similarly, enhancing any of the professional-level variables in the model, will positively influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance, as well as the influence of the other levels mentioned in the model. However, the reverse is also true.

In a scenario where practitioners have the necessary skills, *view communication as a strategic function*, act as a *cultural advocate for stakeholders* and are not stereotyped, they will also be able to positively impact the industry-level variables, as a result of the strong relationship between the individual level and industry level variables. In this scenario they will

[22] Note that the straight lines with single arrowheads, from the ovals (levels) to the rectangles (constructs), indicate the regression coefficients 'as used in SEM'. At first glance the direction of the arrowheads, as typically used in SEM, can seem confusing. However, the arrows should be interpreted to indicate the extent to which the latent variables (ovals/levels) were determined by the constructs (rectangles) (ref. Byrne, 2001:8-9; Hair et al., 2006:714-716; StatSoft Inc., 2008; Stoelting, 2002).

then also be able to *understand the importance of CSR*, *know how and with whom to lobby*, *understand the King II Report* and *involve all stakeholders*. The same is true for improving any of the industry-level variables' influence on the individual and professional-level variables.

The constructs eliminated from the model, seem to be those that are of lesser importance to the practitioner, when considering their contribution to organisational performance.

Therefore, it would seem that practitioners only need to start increasing their knowledge or skill on one of these levels shown in the model to result in a positive influence on their contribution to organisational performance.

8.3.1.3.3. Suggestions from model three

From model three the following suggestions for practitioners can thus be made:

- In order to maximise their contribution to organisational performance, practitioners should focus on enhancing the following variables:
    - Have the *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges*,
    - *Having the right skills set* (this includes listening, conflict management, verbal communication, presentation and networking skills, as well as, staying up to date with trends and new developments in corporate ocmmunication and business, and having clear career goals.),
    - *view corporate communication as* a *strategic function*,
    - operate in a stereotype free environment,
    - act as *a cultural advocate for stakeholders*
    - *provide visible leadership in the profession*,
    - *value their own profession*,
    - strive for *accreditation*,
    - enhance the *proactive role of the function*,
    - *understand the importance of CSR*,
    - *know how and with whom to lobby*,
    - *understand the King II Report and its implication for their profession and current position*, and
    - *involve all stakeholders* in their communication.

- When practitioners can enhance *all* these variables their contribution to organisational performance will be maximized. Also, enhancing *any* of these aspects will lead to an improvement in practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.
- The *ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* is seen as an ability the individual should have in order to contribute to organisational performance.
- As variables on the individual-level improve, so will those on the professional-level, which, in turn, will lead to the function being able to be managed more proactively.
- Organisational-level variables are thus of limited importance in influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.
- The fact that respondents indicated that they viewed the levels of variables as a single large group of influences, is supported by this model to some extent. Individual, professional, industry and the single construct from both organisational and country-level variables, will increase or decrease as any of the other variables increase or decrease. Thus it would seem that respondents had an intuitive feel for the close relationship between the variables that influence them in contributing to organisational performance.

8.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter on advanced statistical analysis focused on using the analysis of quantitative data to answer two Specific research questions.

First, correlation and differentiation statistics were used to determine how respondents viewed the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, according to the *actual* role performed by the respondents. It would seem that corporate communication strategists seem to hold a more moderate view of the various level variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, than both technicians and managers. Furthermore, respondents seemed to be mostly focused on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance that were related to the *actual* role they performed.

Second, structural equation modelling was used to develop three models depicting the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. The third model proved to be the most usefull and provides a prioritised view of the variables practitioners should focus on, as well as the relationship between the variables

that practitioners should keep in mind, when attempting to enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

The next chapter will conclude the study by amalgamating the data to answer each Specific research question, as well as the General research question. Thereafter, the limitations of the study and its contribution are explained, and recommendations for further research are made.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two discussed the conceptualisation of the study and chapter three continued describing the theoretical framework for the study. Chapters five to seven then reported the results of the four semi-structured interviews and 262 completed questionnaires, which were obtained by the methods as discussed in chapter four. Chapter eight discussed the advanced statistical analysis used in the study, including structural equation modelling.

This chapter is subsequently focused on concluding the study by using the results obtained in the previous chapters to respond to the General and Specific research questions posed in chapter one.

Firstly an overview will be provided of the paradigms and theories framing the study, followed by a discussion that will answer each Specific research question, and then the General research question. The Specific research questions will be answered sequentially, except for Specific research questions two and four that will be answered jointly. Thereafter the contribution of the study, recommendations for further research and the limitations of the study will be discussed.

9.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMING OF THE STUDY

Chapter two was devoted to a detailed discussion of the paradigms and theories framing the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance and within which this study was conducted. These paradigms and theories (see table 9.1), thus provide the context within which the General research question and Specific research questions were examined.

Table 9.1: Conceptualisation of the study

Paradigms	Relational paradigm	Reflective paradigm	Two-way symmetrical paradigm	Feminist paradigm
Domain	Corporate communication			
Meta-theory	General excellence theory			
Theories	Relationship management theory Corporate communication roles theory			

First a brief overview of the paradigms pertaining to the study will be provided, followed by an overview of the applicable theories.

9.2.1. Paradigms Pertaining to this Study

Four paradigms, the relational, reflective, two-way symmetrical and feminist paradigms formed the foundation of the study within the corporate communication domain. More than one paradigm was specifically used in order not to limit the study. These paradigms explain the breadth and depth of the corporate communication function and the manner in which it should be practiced. It thus frames the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance within a normative context.

9.2.1.1. Relational paradigm

The definition of public relations implies that it should build and enhance long-term relationships with the organisation's key stakeholders, where the interests of both parties are balanced, through the use of two-way communication (Broom *et al.*, 2000:15; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:157; Carl & Duck, 2004:5; Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:x; Hon & Grunig, 1999:2; Jahansoozi, 2006:62-63; Ledingham, 2003:181, 195; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:379).

This feeding of information into the organisation from the stakeholder group and vice versa in order to build relationships, ensures the functions' management and strategic status (Steyn, 2007:139).

The researcher then suggested, based on literature, a definition for organisational-stakeholder relationships, where the definition and assumptions are separated. The definition reads as follows: "An organisational-stakeholder relationship is a state which exists between

an organisation and its key publics through striving for two-way symmetrical communication, which aims to create a mutually beneficial state for both parties" (as adapted from Broom *et al.*, 2000:6, 18; Grunig, 2006b:3; Ledingham & Burning, in Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160).

The assumptions that must be kept in mind as per the relational paradigm, in summary, are:

- Organisations must realize that they have a *societal responsibility* to manage relationships as organisations and stakeholders *determine each other's future* and there is an *interdependence* between the parties as suggested by the systems theory (Broom *et al.*, 2000:15, 17; Hon & Grunig, 1999:12).
- *Mutually beneficial relationships* must be created, built and maintained by striving towards regular *two-way symmetrical communication* (the more ethical practice of public relations) (Broom *et al.*, 2000:17; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:158; Carl & Duck 2004:7, 21, 28; Grunig, 2006b:3; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 11; Ledingham, 2003:195; Steyn, 2003a:15).
- In order to create an environment for the relationship to thrive both the organisation and stakeholders must have *access* to each other and be *willing to engage in dialogue, and strive towards two-way symmetrical communication* (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160; Hon & Grunig, 1999:14-15).
- The *relationships are separate* from the organisation or stakeholder entities.
- The relationship between the parties must be actively *managed* (Ledingham, 2003:195).

Most important to this study, the relationship paradigm shows that public relations should achieve recognition as a valuable and integral part of organisations (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xvi), as the function can be held accountable for the health and quality (outcome of communication) of stakeholder relationships (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:26, 30; Ledingham, 2001:293).

9.2.1.2. Reflective paradigm

The reflective paradigm takes the relational paradigm further (Steyn, 2004:73; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:16) by acknowledging that society must award an organisation a *license to operate* (legitimise the organisation) in order for the organisation to survive in the long-term (Steyn, 2003a:16, 17, 23-24; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a:253, 257).

The reflective paradigm thus emphasises the public relations *listening* or *reflective* (social consciousness) macro level function. This function aims to understand and convey the

stakeholders' and society's perspectives, values and views of the organisation, to the organisations, in order for the organisation to act responsibly (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14; 2005a:261,263; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:139). In turn, public relations then also applies the expressive task in which the organisation expresses itself transparently to society (Steyn, 2003a:23-24). This paradigm accentuates the need for the ethical and strategic role of public relations.

The reflective paradigm supports L A Grunig's (2008:121) *thinking heart* metaphor, which dictates that public relations practitioners are at their most effective when using their hearts to hear and understand the stakeholders, and their analytical abilities (thinking) to integrate this with the organisation's viewpoints, create plans, and measure impact/effectiveness.

The reflective paradigm is important for this study as it places emphasis on the ethical conduct of the organisation, as well as the strategic role performed by the practitioner within the organisation and broader society.

9.2.1.3. Two-way symmetrical paradigm

From the Excellence Study findings the two-way symmetrical paradigm was developed (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:1-272; Grunig, 1992:1-666; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1-653).

In the two-way symmetrical communication paradigm the organisation and stakeholders try to create understanding and build and maintain long term mutually beneficial relationships with each other through transparent, equal and ethical communication (Grunig, 1989:38, 40; 2001:14; Grunig & White, 1992:42-43). Both parties must also be willing to relinquish some power to the other, and change according to the feedback received, as their future existence depends on it (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:10; Grunig & White, 1992:39).

Organisations that adhere to the symmetrical communication paradigm also adhere to the following presuppositions in their organisational culture (Grunig, 1989:17):

- In line with the systems theory and relational paradigm, organisations are seen as *interdependent* on their environment and are in a constant *moving equilibrium* by *exchanging information freely* within this environment.
- The organisation must value *equity, innovation and autonomy*.
- Management must be *decentralised* and allow stakeholder groups the freedom to argue for their best interests against the government or organisation (*interest-group liberalism*).

- People and organisation must take *responsibility* for their influence on others and use negotiation, compromise and communication to *resolve any conflict*.

The pure two-way symmetrical paradigm, however, presents a two-way symmetrical model, which is seen as unrealistic in practice (Grunig & White, 1992:45-46; Valin, 2004). Therefore, the application of the two-way symmetrical paradigm is practiced as the mixed-motive model (Moncur, 2006:97), which acknowledges the use of two-way asymmetrical communication within the orientation of two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig & White, 1992:48). According to the mixed-motive model, there is a win-win zone in which the organisation and stakeholders can persuade and influence each other to find common ground and create symmetry once again (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11, 356).

For the purposes of this study, this paradigm emphasises ethical public relations practice (Grunig & White, 1992:57; Moncur, 2006:96) and defines public relations in terms of organisational behaviour – which includes organisational communication behaviour (Sharpe, 2000:348).

9.2.1.4. Feminist paradigm

The feminist paradigm firstly accentuates the feminine characteristics of public relations such as a relational orientation (nurturing relationships), facilitating another's development (empowerment), having a focus on social responsibility and valuing diversity, amongst others, which in turn leads to ethical public relations practice that contributes to organisational performance (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:302; Grunig *et al.*, 2000:58; Grunig & White, 1992:50; Hon *et al.,* 1992:429; Van Tonder & Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2006:142, 143).

The feminist paradigm, secondly, influences public relations research, in that public relations research needs to:

- be conducted by all categories of people in order to account for the views of all (including minority groups views). This specifically accentuates the importance of researching public relations within the particular country setting of practitioners, as suggested by Sriramesh and Verčič (2003a:1-9).
- examine the "… learned (or socially constructed) nature of gender and the pressure placed upon both men and women in meeting gender role expectations in public relations" (Yeomans, 2007:213).

- allow for emotion management (Yeomans, 2007:213), previously seen as a feminine trait not allowed in business.

The feminist paradigm thus forces the researcher to view aspects such as gender stereotyping, discrimination, et cetera, from different perspectives in order to understand the viewpoints of majority and minority groups, and consider the *emotional* side of the practitioner.

9.2.2. Theories Pertaining to this Study

In line with the above paradigms, specific theories were further examined in order to contextualise the answering of the research questions. The general excellence theory was used as meta-theoretical framework, and the relationship management and corporate communication roles theories were used as specific theories.

9.2.2.1. General Excellence Theory as Meta-theory

The general excellence theory as meta-theory supplies the rules and assumptions encapsulating the models and theories within the discipline of public relations, in order to limit conceptual confusion (Hazleton & Botan, 1989:7; Littlejohn, 2002:26; Onions, 2006:4; Overton, 2003:13).

The general excellence theory in public relations is derived from the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Meintjies & Steyn, 2006:157), but also aligns with the relational, reflective and feminist paradigms.

The general excellence theory explains how (with what expertise) an organisation should respond and adapt to the environment, specifically in meeting organisational goals which are acceptable for their stakeholders (Grunig, 2001:16; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:1, 10; Steyn, 2000c:28). In other words, it answers the question “Why and how do public relations contribute to organisational effectiveness and to what extent?” (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002:10).

The general excellence theory, as a normative theory, describes the ideal environment and organisational culture, as well as the generic principles of the organisation’s view of public relations, for the practice of excellent public relations (public relations that contributes to organisational performance). The twelve characteristics for the ideal environment and

organisational culture include (Grunig, 1992a:10, 16-17, 24, 26; Grunig & White, 1992:38, 55):

- Giving employees autonomy to make decisions, focus on personal growth and quality of work life, and to create a balance between teamwork and individual efforts.
- An organic structure where centralised decisions are made.
- An innovative entrepreneurial spirit must be cultivated in the organisation.
- The organisation must strive for symmetrical communication with strategic stakeholders.
- Leaders should also provide a vision and direction to employees, and should not rely on authoritarian systems.
- Democratic, participative cultures are needed in the organisation.
- The bottom line needs to be maximised through strategic planning.
- Management must embrace social responsibility.
- Organisations should value diversity and support women and minorities.
- Quality should be a priority in all actions, decisions or resource allocation.
- Operational systems should be developed so as to enable to implementation of the above statements.
- A collaborative societal culture where collaboration, participation, trust and mutual responsibility is important, should be encouraged.

The generic principles of how public relations should be viewed to ensure excellence include (Grunig, 1992a:10, 24, 26; 2001:9; 2006a; Grunig & White, 1992:38):

- Public relations needs to be practiced as a separate management function, not subordinated to other departments, as its nature is different from other functions.
- Public relations needs to serve a technical and strategic role in the organisation.
- Public relations must be ethical and advocate social responsibility.
- Public relations departments have a professional base of knowledge.
- Public relations must be supported and empowered by the dominant coalition.
- Public relations departments must strategically plan, implement and evaluate public relations plans.
- Public relations needs to integrate organisation-wide communication and help shape the organisational culture and environment (underlying conditions) of organisational excellence.
- The value of public relations can be determined by measuring the quality of relationships with stakeholders.

Dozier *et al.* (1995:7, 10) summarised public relations excellence characteristics into three spheres, where the centre sphere constitutes the knowledge of the practitioner, the middle sphere the shared expectations between management and the practitioner, and the third sphere the participative culture of the organisation in which the practitioner works. These spheres match the levels of characteristics for excellent public relations suggested by Grunig (1992a:28) (see section 2.4.2. for a more detailed comparison).

In essence, the general excellence theory contributes to the study by describing the ideal situation for public relations to be able to contribute to organisational performance. This includes the knowledge that the practitioner should have, how public relations should be practiced (what tasks to complete), how the public relations department should be structured, the organisational environment, as well as the contribution of excellent public relations to the organisation's performance.

9.2.2.2. Specific theory: Relationship management theory

The relationship management theory applies the relational paradigm to the public relations practice. In the relationship management theory it is argued that public relations creates financial and non-financial wealth for the organisation by managing and aligning long-term stakeholder relationships inside and outside the organisation (Davis, 2004:188-189; Grunig, 2006b:3; Phillips, 2006a:40). This allows the organisation the freedom to achieve their mission, reduce the costs of regulation, legislation and litigation, reduce the risk of implementing decisions, limits negative publicity, and sometimes increases revenue and provides them with a competitive advantage (Grunig, 2006b:3, 6; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi, 10, 11; Grunig & Haung, 2000:32; Hon & Grunig, 1999:7-9, 11; Phillips, 2006a:34, 35; 2006b:212).

In order to then create accountability for the public relations profession and give it the ability to show itd contribution to organisational performance, relationship health can be measured. A standardised scale to test the health of relationships was developed by Hon and Grunig (1999:1-40), by testing the extent to which the relationship is an exchange or communal relationship, as well as the degree of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction experienced by the parties to the relationship (Grunig, 2002:2; Grunig & Haung, 2000:43-47; Hon & Grunig, 1999:3). A suggestion for the adaptation of this scale to the South African environment was made by Le Roux (2008:264-281).

9.2.2.3. Specific theory: Corporate communication role theory

Corporate communication practitioners can be categorised into different roles according to the frequency of the tasks they perform the most (Grunig, 1992:19; Grunig *et al.*, 2001:223). This set of behaviours or role enactments that practitioners perform, is directly related to the perceived benefits of public relations to the organisation and helps to secure the function's place within the organisation (Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597; Petersen *et al.*, 2002:1; Steyn & Puth, 2000:14; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145).

However, it must be kept in mind that practitioners in some instances combine roles according to the circumstances at hand (Bassett, 1996:38; Moss *et al.*, 2000:292, 300). Furthermore, role must be defined from the practitioner's point of view, and also from management's expectation of the role to be performed (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:197; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:599; Johnson, 1989:243, 244, 255; Moss, 2000:108).

Academic literature clearly describes the history of public relations' role research and findings and role definitions as identified in various countries (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2002:197-198; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:597-600; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205-207; Le Roux, 2004:1-54; Moss, 2000:1-2; Moss & Green, 2001:118-132; Moss *et al.*, 2000:278; Petersen *et al.*, 2002:1-4; Steyn & Puth, 2000:15; Toth *et al.*, 1998:145-146; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002:14; Verčič *et al.*, 2001:380; Warnaby & Moss, 1997:16-17).

The role typology used in this study, and in South Africa, is that conceptualised and statistically verified by Steyn (2000b:21) and confirmed by Everett (2006:1-167), and in part by Petersen *et al.*'s research (2002:14), as the roles of strategist, (redefined) manager and technician. These roles the practitioner performs can be determined by using the statements developed by Steyn (2000c:36-37).

- **The South African public relations strategist**

The strategist operates on the macro level, contributes to, and can even lead organisational strategy by analysing the environment in which the organisation operates and feeding this information back to management for strategic decision-making (Grunig, 2001:6; Steyn, 2003a:23-24; 2007:139, 141, 146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17, 20).

Especially in volatile environments, the practitioner contributes to organisational performance by incorporating the views of stakeholders into strategic decision-making by pointing out the

consequences of actions to the organisation (Grunig, 2001:9; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205; Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; Steyn, 2003b:23-24; 2000c:29-30; 2004:71; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20). The second boundary spanning task, similar to the window function, of the strategist is to give organisational information and interpret the organisation to the stakeholders (Steyn, 2000c:30; 2004:71; Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

The activities included in the strategist role, which were empirically identified and verified, include (Everett, 2006:101-102; Everett & Steyn, 2006:25-26; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18):

- Identifying strategic stakeholders and issues in order to manage external intelligence, and feeding this information into the strategic decision-making process, as well as explaining the implications of strategic decisions on stakeholders to management.
- Actively building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and developing high level communication programmes to deal with strategic issues and stakeholders.
- Contributing to policy making.
- Liaison with the media.
- Reputation risk management.
- Strategic internal stakeholder relationship management.
- Positioning of the public relations department
- Responsibility for public relations strategy.

- **The South African public relations manager**

The South African public relations managerial role is a redefinition of the previously found managerial roles identified in research in countries other than South Africa (Steyn & Puth, 2000:20). The South African public relations manager role is an expressive, inside-out approach at the meso level (functional, departmental or divisional level), where input on the functional strategy is given by advising on consequences or organisational behaviour and suggesting communication messages, and formulating strategy and plans for messages to be communicated outside the organisation (Steyn, 2000c:31; 2007:146; Steyn & Puth, 2000:20). Steyn (2007:140-141) differentiates between a managerial role with a strategic mandate (develop strategies and address organisational strategic goals) and without a strategic mandate (implement, measure functional plans to support strategies and other function's communication efforts) in the South African environment.

The activities of the public relations manager include (Everett, 2006:102-103; Steyn, 2007:140-141):

- Developing deliberate public relations strategy on the meso level that aligns with the organisation's strategic goals.
- Developing emerging public relations strategies in reply to internal, societal and stakeholder issues, that align with the organisation's strategic goals.
- Developing, implementing and evaluating public relations plans that address the strategies mentioned above, in support of other organisational functions, and in support of top management communication to employees.
- Educating organisational leaders on their communication responsibilities.
- Managing activities, workloads and budget of the public relations support function, including demands for communication support.
- Commissioning external agencies to evaluate communication strategies.
- Leading and controlling the public relations department.

- **The South African public relations technician**

Both the public relations technician and manager perform the expressive window function, where communication is used to express the organisation to stakeholders (Steyn, 2000c:26). However, the technician generates communication products to implement the strategy and plans as devised by the manager and, therefore, works on the micro or program level which is traditionally played by most practitioners (Steyn, 2000c:26, 31; 2003a:23-24; 2007:147; Steyn & Puth, 2000:21). The technician role in South Africa, as identified, remains unchanged from previous research on roles in other countries (Steyn, 2000c:31; Steyn & Puth, 2000:21).

9.2.3. Synopsis on the Conceptual Framing of the Study

In conclusion, the above paradigms and theories provide the parameters within which the research was conducted in order to answer the General and Specific research questions. By means of the nature of these paradigms and theories, it also suggests some variables that could influence practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. Most of these suggestions, however, can be considered to be normative or idealistic. However, they give guidelines as to the ideal situation in which the practitioner can contribute to organisational performance. The suggested variables mentioned in the paradigms and theories, were taken into account in the literature study conducted.

In addition, the paradigms and theories used in the study, together with the General research question, guided the selection of the research design and method. Therefore an exploratory and interpretive research strategy was followed in this study.

Each Specific research question will now be discussed.

9.3. ANSWERING THE SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the theoretical framework discussed in section 9.2, the Specific research questions, which were deduced from the General research question, will now be answered. Each of these questions will be reported on separately and sequentially, except for Specific research questions two and four that will be answered jointly. The insights arrived at by answering the Specific research questions will be used to answer the General research question.

9.3.1. Specific Research Question One

Specific research question 1

Which variables are identified in literature as influencing corporate communication practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, globally?

Within the framework suggested by the paradigms and theories discussed above, an extensive literature study was conducted that revealed many variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

Although some authors have tried to create models of variables influencing practitioners, and others discussed certain variables, none have attempted to accommodate all the variables influencing the practitioner in one study. Furthermore, only sections of variables have been categorised (for example country influences, as identified by Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003c:1-601), and the relationship between the variables has not yet been identified (ref. Dozier & Broom, 1995:6; Hill *et al.*, 1994:213-227; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:601; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:216-218; Le Roux, 2004:1-54; Wolf, 2006:181-183).

The literature study revealed numerous variables, which the researcher categorised into five levels, namely individual, organisational, industry, country and professional-level variables (see section 3.3). It is important to note that the levels are not isolated from one another and can have an influence on each other. Furthermore, specific variables can be categorised into more than one level, however, for the purposes of this study they were categorised as motivated in section 7.2. Lastly, many of the mentioned variables are not necessarily limited to the public relations profession, but could be applicable in other professions as well.

Table 9.2. indicates how the various levels of variables influencing public relations practitioners, as identified in literature, were categorised before the empirical phase of this study commenced.

Table 9.2: Categorisation of the variables identified in literature

Level	Constructs	Concepts

Individual	Practitioner characteristics	• Age
		  ○ Time in the organisation
		  ○ Time in the public relations field
		• Race
		  ○ Affirmative action
		  ○ Acting as a cultural intermediary
		• Gender and sexual orientation
		• Stereotyping
		• Personality
		• Practitioner worldview

	Practitioner history	• Education and skills
		  ○ Level of education in corporate communication
		  ○ International knowledge of corporate communication
		  ○ Being able to enact the mixed-motive model
		• Experience
		• Networking

	Career management	• Career goals
		  ○ Practitioner view of corporate communication
		  ○ Role enactment
		• Making clear transitions from positions
		• Taking time out of their careers
		• Managing workloads

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Organisational	Shared expectations	
	Organisational characteristics	• Organisational size and structure • Organisational culture • Organisational politics • Structure and size of the public relations function • The organisation's unique stakeholders environment

	Management variables	• Management's view of the role and support for communication in the organisation
		• Access to management
		• Encroachment and pigeonholing
		• Management tolerance of diversity
		• Management variables:
		  ○ Younger management better understanding the need for communication
		  ○ Having a male or female direct manager
		  ○ Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner

	Mentorship	Mentorship and internship
	Job satisfaction	• Advancement opportunities • Remuneration and benefits • Flexible hours • Lack of the *glass ceiling* • Recognition
Industry	History	Historic role of public relations in the industry
	Industry environment	• Industry-specific regulations such as BEE charters, policies, regulations, and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists
Country	• Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Cultural system • Level of development • Media system	• Crime • Corruption • Activist publics • BEE • Experience of working in the South African environment • Literacy levels • Cultural sensitivity • Media legislation • Job security • Social responsibility

Level	Constructs	Concepts
Professional	Professional legacy	
	Lack of a clear definition	
	Lack of a body of knowledge	
	Showing the importance of communication	• Advocating, educating and defending the profession • Doing public relations research • Being visible in the organisation • Being proactive
	Role of professional bodies	• Membership • Enhancing recognition for the function • Setting standards for education and skills sets • Accreditation of the function • Professionalisation of the function • Enforcing ethical practice

This table indicates the first comprehensive list of all variables, consolidated, categorised and listed according to literature, which influence practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.

9.3.2. Specific Research Questions Two and Four

The second and fourth Specific research questions are related and were, therefore, jointly answered. These questions read as follows:

Specific research question 2

What are the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance?

Specific research question 4

How similar are the perceptions of South African practitioners to those of the practitioners mentioned in literature?

In order to answer Specific research question two, the perceptions of the respondents on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, as found in the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, will now be discussed and compared with literature where applicable. The qualitative and quantitative results will be combined. The discussion will start with a general introductory section, followed by a discussion of the variables on the different levels.

9.3.2.1. General Introduction

Through the semi-structured interviews three more concepts were added to the variable list identified in literature. This included multilingualism, having a higher educational qualification than their direct manager and connectedness.

Respondents reported their views on the variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance as one large entity and not as separate levels or categories. However, through statistical analysis (factor analysis), it was determined that the levels of variables are a valid way of categorising the variables, if the statements pertaining to each level were re-categorised (see section 7.3.–7.7.). A factor analysis guided the newly categorised and verified constructs pertaining to each level of variables. Table 9.3 summarises the findings, in comparison with the original categorisation from literature.

Table 9.3: Re-categorisation of constructs

Level	Constructs and concepts identified in literature		Constructs as per the factor analysis
	Constructs	**Concepts**	

Individual	Practitioner characteristics	• Age
		  ○ Time in organisation
		  ○ Time in public relations
		• Race
		• Gender and sexual orientation
		• Multilingualism
		• Stereotyping
		• Personality
		• Practitioner worldview
			• Having the right skills set
			• Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function
			• Importance of a stereotype free environment
			• Cultural advocate for stakeholders
			• Viewing corporate communication as a technical function
			• Existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession
			• Personal characteristics as constraints
			• Feminisation
			• View on job limitations
			• International experience
			• Multilingualism
			• Clear transition to a new position

	Practitioner history	• Education • Experience • Networking	

	Career management	• Career goals
		  ○ Practitioner view of corporate communication
		  ○ Role enactment
		• Making clear transitions from positions
		• Taking time out of their careers
		• Managing workloads	

Level	Constructs and concepts identified in literature		Constructs as per the factor analysis
	Constructs	**Concepts**	
Organisational	Shared expectations		• Pro-active role of the function • Status of corporate communication within the organisation • Relationship with the dominant coalition • Relating to stakeholders • Security of the communication function in the organisation • Management's age • Organisational size • Capacity building (internship) • Targeted media use
	Organisational characteristics	• Organisation size and structure • Organisation culture • Organisational politics • Structure and size of the public relations function	

	Management influences	• Management view of the role and support for communication in the organisation
		• Access to management
		• Encroachment and pigeonholing
		• Management tolerance of diversity
		• Management variables:
		  ○ Having a higher educational qualification than their manager
		  ○ Younger management better understanding the need for communication
		  ○ Having a male or female direct manager
		  ○ Management taking credit for work done by the practitioner	

	Mentorship		
	Job satisfaction	• Advancement opportunities • Remuneration and benefits • Flexible hours • Lack of the *glass ceiling* • Recognition	
Industry	History	Historic role of public relations in the industry	• Industry-level variables
	Industry environment	• Industry specific regulations such as BEE charters, policies, regulations, and the *King II Report* • Working with specific stakeholders such as illiterates / literates, communities, activists	

Level	Constructs and concepts identified in literature		Constructs as per the factor analysis
	Constructs	**Concepts**	
County level	• Cultural system • Political system • Economic system • Extent of activism • Level of development • Media system	• Crime • Corruption • Activist publics • BEE • Experience of working in the South African environment • Literacy levels • Cultural sensitivity • Media legislation • Connectedness • Job security • Social responsibility	• Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges • Sense of security • Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands
Professional-level	Professional legacy		• Accreditation • Visible leadership in the profession • Practitioners harming the function • Valuing their own profession • International best practice knowledge
	Lack of a clear definition		
	Lack of a body of knowledge		
	Showing the importance of communication	• Advocating, educating and defending the profession • Doing public relations research • Being visible in the organisation • Being proactive	
	Role of professional bodies	• Membership • Enhancing recognition for the function • Setting standards for education and skills sets • Accreditation of the function • Professionalisation of the function • Enforcing ethical practice	

The above table represents a consolidated list of variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, as re-categorised and empirically verified in the study. Through this list the various variables mentioned and examined in different individual studies are consolidated into one study.

In contrast to literature, from the semi-structured interviews it was found that practitioners are seen as being responsible for managing the variables influencing them in contributing to organisational performance – thus supposed to show a *take-charge attitude*. Furthermore,

practitioners tended to focus more on individual-level variables, than any of the other levels of variables, as these were seen to be *closer* to them and more manageable.

The respondents' perception of each of the levels of influences on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance will now be briefly stated.

9.3.2.2. Individual-level variables

- **Having the right skills set**

Some literature suggests that practitioners often lack the necessary skills to perform their job successfully (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Kruckeberg, 2000b:145; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4). The ratings of the respondents on the skills needed to perform in their position, however, indicated that they might understand what is needed in the workplace.

In addition to the suggestions in literature, it was indicated that practitioners need to be multilingual, be able to network and have emotional maturity in order to facilitate their contribution to organisational performance. Networking was equated with connectedness, which indicated that who you know is seen to give power to practitioners in order to enable them to then contribute more to organisational performance, especially when they are stereotyped.

In addition, respondents elaborated on what is stated in literature (Grunig, 2008:121; Yeomans, 2007:212-221) and pointed out that emotional maturity, more than merely personality, experience or education, would give the practitioner the skills to handle difficult situations; deal with diverse stakeholder views; and the ability to gain integrity within management circles.

Regarding skills, it was found that practitioners should be politically correct and sensitive towards others, and understand the different worldviews of different stakeholders in order to maximise their impact on stakeholders and contribution to organisational performance.

Furthermore they should be:

- open-minded,
- a *go-getter* and problem-solver,
- able to act as a facilitator,
- able to explain their ideas clearly, and
- able to act as a leader.

Regarding education the respondents argued that:

- there needed to be more appropriate training available for practitioners active in the field.
- practitioners expect too much from education alone in terms of career advancement, and should rather focus on a life-long learning attitude.
- practitioners need to have business knowledge.

Respondents also specifically added that there is a need for corporate communication educators to also have business experience as corporate communication practitioners. It is argued that this would benefit the student by providing the education, as well as *real life business* lessons from the educator's experience (ref. Brown & Fall, 2005:301).

Once again this view confirms that both education and business experience are important to practitioners when considering their contribution to organisational performance. However, although literature suggests having a good business background improves the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance (ref. Groenewald, 1998b:19), very few respondents indicated that they had a B.Com degree. The semi-structured interview findings supported literature in suggesting that a practitioner who is knowledgeable on business matters would be able to contribute more to organisational performance (ref. Puth, 1994:40-52).

It is believed that g*ood public relations scholars* do not move into the profession, and therefore their knowledge and skills are lost to the practice. Many of the top students select to pursue careers outside public relations, become stay-at-home parents, start their own businesses, or, once their further studies are completed, move into academia.

Ultimately it was argued that over and above their skills and experience, practitioners' behaviour and personality should enforce each other.

- **Viewing corporate communication as a strategic function**

In agreement with literature respondents rated the *strategic and proactive view of corporate communication* as very important (ref. Bütschi and Steyn, 2006:106-109; De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:6,8; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205; Moss *et al.*, 2000:283; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17). The semi-structured interview respondents elaborated on this statement by stating that the practitioner should have the ability to practice, as well as be educated in, and have experience in the relational and strategic paradigms in order to contribute on a strategic level to organisational performance (ref. Bruning *et al.*, 2008:29; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:157; Bütschi & Steyn, 2006:106-109; De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:9; Hon & Grunig, 1999:2; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:x; Ledingham, 2003:195; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a:xiii; Newsom *et al.*, 2007:58). The point was also made that practitioners' view of the function as strategic or not, is reflected in their career goals.

- **Stereotyping**

Both the constructs of *importance of a stereotype free environment,* as well as the *existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession* will be discussed together, as these constructs can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

Respondents indicated strongly, similar to the suggestions in literature, that the practitioner should not be stereotyped according to race or gender, as this could negatively influence his/her contribution to organisational performance (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:23).

Since many respondents indicated that gender (38.9%) and racial (26.4%) stereotyping exist in the profession, the influence of stereotyping on the practitioner cannot be ignored. It was implied that connectedness (similar to networking) would assist the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, in situations where practitioners were stereotyped. Respondents indicated that affirmative action has not led to management expecting less from the practitioner in terms of making a contribution to organisational performance.

- **Cultural advocate for stakeholders**

It would seem that respondents understood and valued their advisory and proactive role of acting as an early warning system to management, as suggested in literature. Searching for new communication opportunities, acting as an advocate for stakeholders and/or being a cultural interpreter were rated lower than the advisory and proactive roles of the practitioner. This could point to the respondents' lack of relevant education, the role they currently performed or their understanding of what corporate communication encompasses.

- **Viewing corporate communication as a technical function**

Respondents argued that viewing the corporate communication function as *only* technical would not assist them in contributing to organisational performance. This finding is in accordance with literature (De Beer, 2001:2; Grunig, 2001:7; Moss *et al.*, 2000:31).

- **Personal characteristics as constraints**

Practitioners do not need to be of a certain age or gender in order to contribute to organisational performance. Furthermore, homosexual people are not considered to be better practitioners than heterosexual people. However, there might be a possibility that respondents answered that sexual orientation would not influence practitioners' contribution, in order not to stereotype.

In addition, the respondents in the semi-structured interviews added that the practitioner does not necessarily have to be female or have a female orientation (be they male or female), in order to contribute to organisational performance by acting more socially responsible and naturally applying two-way symmetrical communication. This finding seems to contradict findings in literature suggesting that practitioners with a female orientation naturally enact the more strategic role (ref. Grunig *et al.*, 2001:22).

Regarding age, the findings coincide with Grunig *et al.*'s (2001:315) suggestion that some practitioners are seen as *too old* and others as *too young* to contribute to organisational performance. However, practitioner age was positively correlated with respondents' monthly income, years experience in corporate communication and years working for a specific organisation – and, more importantly, with the actual role performed by the practitioner. Thus it could thus be suggested that, as expected, older practitioners typically perform the managerial and strategist roles. Furthermore, where a strategist is active in an organisation there is a greater annual communication budget available, which also leads to greater use of both informal and formal research. In addition strategists are also considered to be street wise.

The semi-structured interviews explained these variables further in that the *right type of experience*, more than gender or age, was crucial to practitioners in order to contribute to organisational performance.

- **Feminisation**

From the questionnaire results it seemed that the profession in South Africa is feminised, as is the case in other countries (ref. Aldoory & Toth, 2002:122; De Wet *et al.*, 2008:15;

Holtzhausen, 2005:408; Sha & Toth, 2005:93-99). Unlike in literature, it was found, by analysing the semi-structured interview results, that respondents had conflicting views regarding the following:

- whether females or people with feminine characteristics bring a relationship orientation to the function (ref. Grunig *et al.,* 2001:22), or are hard and without empathy, and
- whether the large number of female practitioners had an influence on salary discrepancies and career opportunities (ref. Grunig *et al.,* 2001:4, 172, 180-181, 310), or that stereotyping does not exist in the profession (ref. Hutton, 2005:82). This finding correlates with the suggestion in literature that feminisation alone cannot be held accountable for the profession's loss of credibility..

Even though most respondents (66.3%) indicated that they had not experienced sexual harassment, 10.8% did report experiencing it. Therefore sexual harassment cannot be ignored. Interestingly, it seems as if respondents who did not interpret events in their career as sexual harassment would also not view these events as impacting on their contribution to organisational performance.

- **View on job limitations**

Respondents were divided on whether affirmative action limited advancement in their careers. This differs somewhat from the findings from the semi-structured interviews, where affirmative action was listed as an influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. The racial breakdown of the respondents, however, could have influenced this perception, as black respondents were more positive towards the influence of affirmative action on their careers than white practitioners. This can be expected, as affirmative action has benefited black rather than white respondents. Interestingly, it was also found that an almost equal percentage of white and black respondents enacted the three roles, indicating that both black and white respondents progressed in their careers to the managerial and strategist roles. This could indicate that affirmative action has had an influence on the public relations practitioner landscape.

- **International experience**

Respondents indicated having international experience as not extremely important in order to contribute to organisational performance. This is in agreement with literature suggesting that having knowledge on international practices would benefit the practitioner, but is not a prerequisite for a practitioner to contribute to organisational performance (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4).

- **Multilingualism**

From the questionnaire it was found that respondents rated multilingualism as more important than unimportant. Together with the semi-structured interview findings, being multilingual could thus be considered as an important influence on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa.

- **Clear transition to a new position**

Respondents indicated that they could not focus only on their new responsibilities when promoted. Although making a clear transition to a new position when promoted is theoretically sound (Steyn & Puth, 2000:228), it might not be realistic for South African practitioners to be totally released from all technical duties when being promoted to the managerial or strategist level. Especially in South Africa, where downsizing in economically difficult times, is known to have happened, practitioners can be expected to perform both technical and managerial or strategic tasks.

9.3.2.3. Organisational-level variables

- **Proactive role of the function**

It would seem that respondents generally experienced their management to be appreciative of the communication function as suggested by Cornelissen *et al.* (2006:114), Moss *et al.* (2000:291) and Valin (2004), and that the respondents tended to act proactively, which in turn would enhance practitioners' contribution to organisational performance (ref. Steyn, 2000b:33; 2000c:37; Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

In addition, management's attitude to corporate communication was seen as a very important variable influencing the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. Organisational politics was also seen as an influence on the extent to which the practitioner could act proactively, but less so than management viewing corporate communication as important. Therefore, respondents argued, in addition to findings from literature, that management should attend courses on the value of public relations.

In accordance with literature, respondents believe that *organisational politics* do exist in their own organisations (ref. Le Roux, 2004:39, 47) and, furthermore, impact negatively on their ability to contribute to organisational performance. In the semi-structured interviews respondents suggested that the practitioner should be aware of the influence of organisational politics, but not participate in it, as was suggested by Le Roux (2004:47).

- **Status of corporate communication within the organisation**

Respondents indicated, in line with literature, that practitioners need shared expectations with management, such as management's recognition of the function and a clear job description as well as management support, in order to contribute to organisational performance (Gray, 2004:26-27). Furthermore, respondents agreed with literature on the importance of having support from their communication department in order to assist them to contribute more to organisational performance (ref. Dozier *et al.,* 1995:11). The status of the corporate communication function within the organisation is thus seen to be an important variable influencing practitioners' contributions to organisational performance.

- **Relationship with the dominant coalition**

A strong relationship with the dominant coalition seemed to be very important to respondents in contributing to organisational performance. This included having *shared expectations* with management on the role of communication in the organisation and *management viewing corporate communication as important*.

Similar to literature, most of the respondents agreed that management appreciated and recognised the importance of the corporate communication function, allowing the practitioner close contact with the CEO or MD, and which were seen to influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance positively (ref. Cornelissen *et al.*, 2006:114; Gray, 2004:28; Hill *et al.*, 1994:217; Moss *et al.*, 2000:291; IABC, 2002:7; O'Neil, 2003a:165; Valin, 2004). This finding, to some extent, also supports Steyn's (2000a:1-2; 2000c:40-41) suggestion that top managers in South Africa expect corporate communication practitioners to perform a strategic role. Having direct contact with the CEO, MD, or dominant coalition was rated, as mentioned in literature, as extremely important in equipping the practitioner with the necessary power to contribute to organisational performance (ref. Hill *et al.*, 1994:217).

Additionally, management's support of the function and practitioner was also seen as crucial. In accordance with literature, this would allow the practitioner to act strategically and contribute to organisational performance (Awad, 1985:25; Grunig, 2001:8; Sweep *et al.*, 1994:327).

Creating shared expectations with management on the communication function, was seen by respondents as a very important influence on practitioners contributing to organisational performance (ref. Dozier *et al.*, 1995:14-17; Gray, 2004:26-27).

- **Relating to stakeholders**

Respondents indicated that practitioners are mostly open and frank towards their stakeholders and include stakeholder views when making decisions. However practically this is not always possible. Literature normatively suggests that communication with stakeholders should always be conducted through constant two-way symmetrical communication (ref. Broom *et al.*, 2000:6, 18; Grunig, 2006b:3; Ledingham & Burning in Bruning & Ledingham, 1999:160) and always be transparent in order to create and increase trust (Jahasoozi, 2006:80, 83). However, the mixed-motive model, practiced within the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Grunig & White, 1992:48), is suggested as the practical application of the two-way symmetrical communication model and can also lead to success. The mixed-motive model can thus be considered closer to respondents' views on relating to stakeholders.

When then conducting their work – thus relating to stakeholders – it would seem that respondents do get credit for their work, although it may not always happen when it is due.

- **Security of the communication function in the organisation**

Respondents indicated feeling a lack of security for the function in the organisation, due to factors such as downsizing, encroachment and limited advancement opportunities, which impede their contribution to organisational performance. Respondents in both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as suggested in literature, indicated that encroachment could hinder them to contribute to organisational performance (Ehling *et al.*, 1992:359,363; Grunig *et al.*, 2001:179-180; Hogg & Doolan, 1999:600; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211; Lee, 2005:279). Journalistic encroachment was specifically mentioned, although literature suggests that encroachment can come from any other function (ref. Van Ruler & De Lange, 2003:155).

These aspects, that limit the practitioner's security in the function, will also influence the practitioner's job satisfaction. Only about 60% of the respondents indicated that they experienced job satisfaction. The lack of job satisfaction can thus be an indication of the factors mentioned above, or the fact that the organisations in which the practitioners worked did not have a participative culture, and that the practitioners did not perform the role which they preferred (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:71, 114, 218-219, 488). Once again, a lack of job satisfaction can influence the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance.

- **Management's age**

It would seem that respondents indicated that older and younger managers have knowledge about corporate communication, but younger managers were more open to new ideas and,

therefore, also to the corporate communication function. This finding seems to confirm reports in literature suggesting that a younger manager would possibly understand the need for communication better than an older manager (Le Roux, 2004:36, 44).

Furthermore, the semi-structured interview respondents added two more aspects not specifically mentioned in literature:

- first, that in some cases male managers are resistant to female employees and their contribution to organisational performance; and
- second, that having a higher educational qualification than your direct manager, can pose a challenge to practitioners.

- **Organisational size**

An issue not rated strongly and, therefore, assumed to be less important, is the question of organisational size as a variable impacting on the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance. Respondents seemed to slightly favour the view of being able to make a bigger contribution in a smaller organisation. The respondents in the semi-structured interviews agreed that being aware of organisational politics and culture, was more important than considering organisational size and structure. However, Dozier and Grunig (1992:398,402) argued that the size of the organisation does not necessarily influence the communication function, as long as the structure was flexible and could provide the practitioner with access to the dominant coalition. Fatt (1996:19) agreed with this by arguing that a big organisation can also take decisions quickly, similar to their smaller counterparts, when they have a commitment to communicate within.

- **Capacity building**

When considering capacity building, both internships and mentorship need to be taken into account.

Internships seemed to be relatively unimportant to respondents and can be considered not the norm in South African organisations. However, younger respondents did consider being part of an internship programme as more important than the older respondents. This could be due to the fact that younger practitioners possibly have been part of such a programme or seen the benefits their peers experienced through such a programme.

Many respondents indicated that they had some form of mentorship, possibly indicating that the practice of mentorship is more widely applied in the South African environment, than is suggested in literature (see section 3.5.4.). However, the respondents elaborated and

indicated that mentoring is seen as part of South African culture and, therefore, should be easy to apply in business. Furthermore, they stated that practitioners should not only want to be mentored, but have a responsibility to offer themselves as mentors, and that mentors should be limited to only those practitioners who have appropriate corporate communication education and experience within the relational and strategist paradigms.

- **Targeted media use**

Targeted media use, considering the audience rather than the media ownership when selecting media to use for stakeholder communication, was only considered to be somewhat important as a variable influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

9.3.2.4. Industry-level variables

Research into the industry-level variables remained more general as the study was conducted across industries.

It was found that the respondents viewed the specific industry in which their employer operated, as a lesser influence on their contribution to organisational performance, than country-level influences. However, Lauzen and Dozier (1992:207) and Moss *et al.* (2000:297, 302) posit that a competitive, uncertain and highly regulated industry will, for example, force the practitioner to play a more important and even strategic role. Practitioners should be able to adapt to these differing challenges and be able to apply their knowledge in not only prioritising stakeholders, but also in building relationships with these diverse stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:64-70).

It could also be the case that practitioners view indsutry–level variables, as part of country-level variables. For example, stakeholders that are very vocal and act as activists are seen to fit into the country's *level of activism*, rather than being an industry specific problem (ref. Jonah, 2001:3, 4, 8, 9; NUM, 2001).

Practitioners should be able to apply their knowledge to the specific industry and its challenges, which can only be done once the industry is understood by the practitioner (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:4). Respondents understand the importance of corporate social responsibility and being sensitive to involving all relevant stakeholders on issues, while indicating that understanding the principles of the *King II Report* is to them, less important. This could indicate a lack of knowledge about the report and its application by the respondents, or point to the specific industry the respondents work in and the industry's

focus on the *King II Report*, as this is not enforceable. Therefore, the practitioner might be aware of other unique challenges in terms of the regulatory environment, and the unique landscape of stakeholders within this industry (ref. Le Roux, 2005:304-305; Moss *et al.,* 2000:297), which can impact on the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance, while not knowing about the *King II Report*. At the time of the study the *King III Report*, which has more profound implications for the governance of stakeholder management and communication, was not yet available. Practitioners should, however, also be aware and informed about the *King III Report's* impact, as this is crucial for organisational survival (PWC, 2009:2).

Knowing who the industry players are in order to lobby, was seen as *important* by respondents due to the fact that practitioners need access to decision makers and influencers in order to fulfil the strategic role and contribute more to organisational performance. However, this finding questions the extent of two-way symmetrical communication use within the participating organisations, and coincides with the suggested use of the mixed motive model discussed under *relating to stakeholders* above.

9.3.2.5. Country-level variables

- **Ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges**

The findings indicate that the practitioner needs to understand, have knowledge and adapt to the South African environment in order to be able to contribute to organisational performance, as well as to the fact that respondents could have argued that the South African environment is different from other environments (ref. Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003a:3,6). The semi-structured interview findings supported this statement and added that the practitioner needed to be able to adapt to change, be knowledgeable about legislation, protocol, and the like; be able to work with diverse stakeholders and understand the specific communication channels to be used for each; as well as be able to apply first-world knowledge to a third-world context. Specifically, being open to the challenges and changes in South Africa, and knowing how to deal with both literate and illiterate stakeholders, were seen as important.

- **Sense of security**

When referring to the respondents' sense of security in the function, connectedness and having job security were mentioned.

The respondents were divided on whether connectedness (similar to networking) would aid practitioners in contributing more to organisational performance. This could be as a result of their specific organisational or industry environment, or the practitioners' political activeness. Semi-structured interview respondents further added that connectedness is important within the South African environment, highlighting the belief that political affiliation could aid a practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

Furthermore, respondents indicated that they had job security. Given the various concerns also mentioned by the respondents that could be related to job security (such as downsizing, the current uncertain economic environment, and so forth), the respondents' views could indicate their ignorance regarding the vulnerability of their position.

- **Pressure to comply with South African external stakeholders' demands**

Respondents indicated that affirmative action and BEE had a greater impact on the profession than just the allocation of positions to previously disadvantaged individuals, as suggested in literature (ref. Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) (53/2003), see section 3.7.2.). Affirmative action and BEE was seen to influence the practitioners' career advancement, selection of suppliers, and influence their stakeholder profiles. These aspects were considered to also influence the stakeholder landscape and the attitude of stakeholders towards the organisation. Respondents seemed to have differing individual experiences of enforced BEE requirements regarding to service providers. A cross-tabulation with race indicated that black respondents were more critical about the use of BEE agencies or contracts, than white respondents. White respondents may have responded more positively about BEE requirements so as not to be politically incorrect.

Dealing with activists publics are not seen as an important variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. It could also be a possibility that typically *activist* stakeholders are merely seen as strategic publics and not as activists by the respondents.

9.3.2.6. Professional-level variables

- **Accreditation**

Respondents considered accreditation as important, but not essential, with some practitioners pursuing this issue and others not. This could be due to the fact that respondents need to be educated about the benefits of accreditation, or that accreditation is not demanded and valued in business, or that the nature of the profession is not considered suitable for accreditation; or – when keeping the low number of respondents that are

professional body members in mind – that professional bodies are not seen as strong enough or in a position to pursue accreditation. This is in agreement with L'Etang's (2004:221) finding that only a small group of practitioners is concerned with accreditation, as many feel that professional status is not needed to conduct their work. In the semi-structured interview findings, it was further argued that respondents feel that accreditation would only become a reality once pull factors – a need from business for accreditation – are also established. This would also depend on whether the professional body itself was known and recognised within business.

- **Visible leadership in the profession**

When considering visible leadership in the profession respondents indicated, similar to suggestions in literature, that they would prefer to provide visible leadership in the profession by education management and by being visible in the organisations where they worked (Bhimani, 1995:275). However, they did not favour speaking out about their success in advocating and defending the function.

In providing visible leadership in the profession, one would expect the role of professional membership to be important, but only some practitioners saw professional membership as important – most downplayed its usefulness, as they did not believe that this membership would provide them with valuable information and support.

The professional bodies' viewpoint on the influences on practitioners in contributing to organisational performance offered some more insight into this issue.

Although the two professional bodies' viewpoints differed slightly – the IABC focused more on the strategic and PRISA more on the technical roles of the practitioner – their views also differed from those of the respondents in the following ways:

- The professional bodies placed great emphasis on formal education, while respondents placed emphasis on ongoing, as well as formal education – within the strategic and relational paradigms – as well as experience and learning from others, and a life-long learning attitude.
- Professional bodies saw a role for themselves in educating management on the role of corporate communication (see section 3.7.5.), while respondents would rather educate management themselves.
- Professional bodies also placed great value on accreditation as an aspect that would assist the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. Respondents,

however, did not feel as strongly about this point as the professional bodies, and pointed to the need for accreditation to be created within business (pull-factor).

- Lastly, the professional bodies seemed to simplify the variables influencing the practitioner to only a few core variables and were convinced that they could impact these variables positively.

- **Practitioners harming the function**

Respondents harm the function by sometimes being, knowing or talking about incapable and corrupt practitioners. Specifically, in a profession where ethics and practicing according to a set of shared values is important, this could be a problem. Literature specifically emphasises that ethical conduct is crucial to the practice and can add to the standing of the profession if it is adhered to (ref. Nielsen, 2006:1-7; Newsom *et al.*, 2007:63, Steiner, 2001:155; Seeger *et al.*, 2005a:139). In addition, professional bodies are limited in enforcing any ethical codes or ethical practice (Motion & Leitch, 2005:50-51).

The *vague definition of the function* and its acknowledgment by practitioners can add to the devaluation of the function and keep practitioners from contributing to organisational performance. As a possible result, people may also move to a career in corporate communication, for superficial reasons such as *it seems interesting* or they *like working with people*.

- **Valuing their own profession**

In valuing the profession practitioners placed a very high importance on being ethical. The respondents however indicated that giving back to the profession and educating management, although important, were not nearly as important as being ethical as part of practitioners' day to day conduct. The above findings seem to contradict literature sources which suggested that corporate communication practitioners downplay the function (Spicer, 1997:36; Van Ruler, 1997:252). However, it does agree with the statement that public relations must be ethical in order to be considered legitimate and able to contribute to organisational performance (ref. Seeger *et al.,* 2005a:139). The semi-structured interview respondents, however, added a contribution no mentioned in literature, by stating that ethical practice should not be dependent on a code or charter, but be inherent in the practitioners themselves.

Membership of a professional body was also considered to be part of valuing their own profession. However, as mentioned earlier, the respondents indicated a lack of interest in professional membership as it does not provide them with valuable information and support.

Respondents' attitude towards the professional bodies can be explained when it is considered that they expect professional bodies to be a vehicle through which they can plough back into the profession; share knowledge; show how public relations can contribute to organisational performance; up-skill practitioners; and assist them with knowledge on the latest developments. Respondents thus expect more from professional bodies than what is stated in literature.

- **International best practice knowledge**

International best practice knowledge was seen as an important variable influencing on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance by some respondents, while others did not value it. However, literature suggested that in South Africa and globally, knowledge of international practices or best practice would benefit the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance (Ferreira & Verwey, 2004:94; Le Roux, 2004:32, 39; Plowman, 1998:243; Steyn, 2000a:4).

9.3.2.7. Synopsis on respondents' view on variables

In summary, the requirements as described by the respondents for a practitioner to contribute to organisational performance, are extensive. One could question the realism of finding one individual with all these skills and knowledge, or this may point to the uniqueness of the corporate communication practitioner.

The above qualitative and quantitative data analysis confirms that there are many variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance. The analysis provides empirical verification of the variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance as identified in literature. However, the analysis suggests an alternative method of categorisation and labelling concepts and constructs, and also identifies a number of new variables in addition to those suggested in literature.

Although, in some instances, some variables were considered more important than others, a complete picture of the relationships between all the variables, could not be established at this point. Therefore, a different, and more scientific method of determining the relationships between the variables influencing practitioners was used, namely structural equation modelling (see Specific research question five below).

9.3.3. Specific Research Question Three: Variances in Perceptions of Variables Influencing Respondents, Per Role Performed

Specific research question three reads:

> ***Specific research question 3***
> *How do the aforementioned perceptions of South African practitioners vary according to the corporate communication role they perform?*

The questionnaire findings were used to answer this specific research question as reported in section 8.2. Statistical correlations between the *actual* role performed and respondents' perceptions of the various newly categorised constructs in the five levels of variables, were calculated by using Spearman's or Eta's correlation coefficient. To determine differences, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used, from where significant findings were further analysed by means of cross-tabulations (see section 4.3.4.8.2.).

As expected no correlations with an r-value of greater than 0.300 were found between the respondents' *actual* role and:

- the levels of variables (individual, organisational, industry, country and professional),
- the constructs within each level of variables, or
- the specific statements pertaining to each construct within each level of variables.

These findings were expected as respondents' views on the variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance were expected to rather differ than co-vary, according to the role they performed.

As a result, the differences between respondents' *actual* role performed and the constructs pertaining to each level of variables, were examined.

In essence, the results indicated that corporate communication strategists generally seem to hold a more moderate view of the various level variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance, than both the technicians and managers. The managers and technicians seemed to view the influences of variables as greater than the strategists did, whether the variable had a positive or negative influence on the practitioner.

Overall, however, it would seem that respondents viewed the variables pertaining to their specific role performed, as more important than other.

In this view strategists perceived actions related to the liaison role between the organisation and stakeholders as important. Corporate communication managers, in turn, viewed aspects relating to the activities of the corporate communication practitioners and the departments which they managed, as important. Corporate communication technicians then focused more on personal characteristics as constraints and visible leadership in the profession, as these aspects pertain to their role of creating and aligning various communication products within the organisation.

Respondents performing all three roles, however, agreed on the influence and importance of general profession- related variables, such as the *existence of stereotyping in the corporate communication profession*, *feminisation*, *proactive role of the function*, *management's age* and *capacity building*.

9.3.4. Specific Research Question Five: Relationship between the Variables

In order to provide a view of the relationship between the variables, as well as the importance of the variables identified in the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, structural equation modelling was used. This advanced statistical method provided the answer to Specific research question five:

> ***Specific research question 5***
> *What is the relationship between the variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance in South Africa?*

The structural equation modelling process provides a method of organising variables by using various statistical analysis techniques simultaneously. However, the SEM models produced cannot be considered the *only* models for the data collected, but depending on their goodness-of-fit indicators, are *suggested* models that fit the data. Through the SEM process, some constructs from the individual and organisational-levels were indicated to have a smaller impact on practitioners' contribution to organisational performance and were,

therefore, omitted in an effort to reduce the complexity of the model (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:509). From the data three models were created.

Table 9.4: Goodness-of-fit indicators for the various models

Model	Comparative Fit Index	RMSEA	RMSEA's lower confidence limit	RMSEA's higher confidence limit
Model one	0.739	0.084	0.076	0.092
Model two	0.833	0.085	0.072	0.097
Model three	0.943	0.058	0.037	0.079

From table 9.4 it can be seen that the first model obtained a fair to good fit of the model to the data. Keeping in mind that this is the first model attempting to include all the possible variables, the model fit can be considered satisfactory and practically useful (ref. Byrne, 2001:88; Garson, 2009; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747, 751; Nortje, 2003:24-25). The first model mainly started the prioritisation process of the variables, and suggested relationships between the remaining more important variables. However, even more importantly, from this model suggestions could be made for a more enhanced model, containing prioritised variables. This then resulted in the creation of model two.

In model two a better fit than model one was obtained, and due to the fact that the model made theoretical and practical sense, the model fit was considered satisfactory (ref. Byrne, 2001:88; Garson, 2009; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:511; Hair *et al.*, 2006:747, 751; Nortje, 2003:24-25). Model two focused on the impact of each level of variables on the practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. All the levels, excluding organisational-level variables, were shown to be of the utmost importance, with very high regression values. However, once again, from the relationship between variables, and the impact value of the variables included in the model, a more enhanced model could be created. This resulted in the development of the last model, model three.

Model three obtained the best fit of all the models, since this model scored the highest goodness-of-fit results and, taking into account the fact that this model made theoretical and practical sense, it can be considered the most useful of the three models. Figure 9.1. depicts model three.

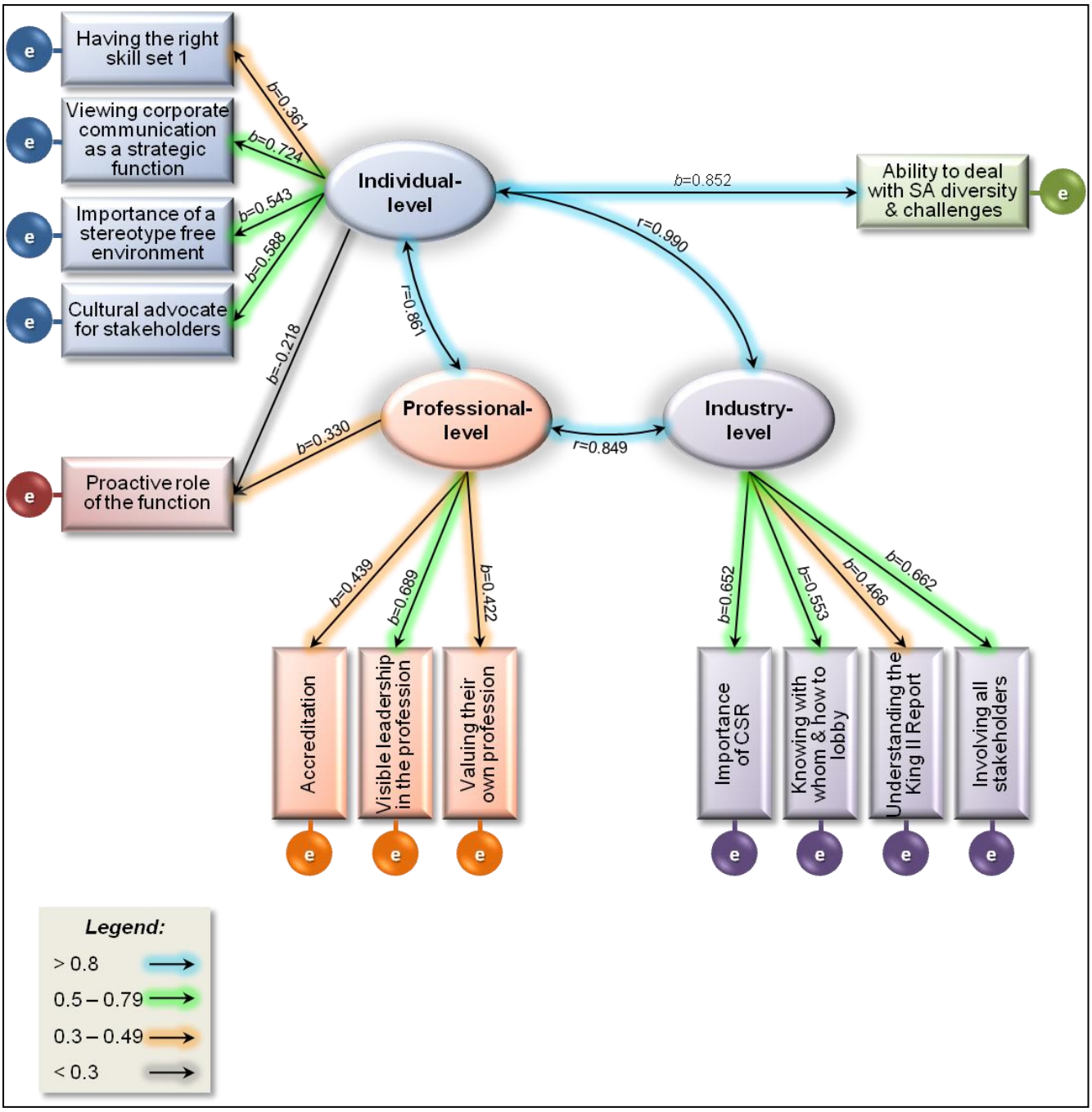


Figure 9.1: Model three

From model three, it is clear that the individual, professional and industry-levels are very highly correlated, indicating that a positive change in any of these levels, will lead to a similar change in any of the other levels, and vice versa. By implication then, the practitioner needs to focus on any of the thirteen variables depicted in the model, within his/her control. Improvement in any of these variables will then also enhance the impact of the remaining variables. This related view of the variables, as depicted in model three, to some extent, also explains and supports the respondents' view that the variables are seen as a single large group of variables.

Variables omitted from this model, such as organisational-level variables (except for *proactive role of the function*), should be of little concern to the practitioner, as it has been proved statistically to have a weak impact on organisational performance. This could be due to the fact that variables such as *organisation size*, *capacity building*, *security of the function* and so forth, are considered a given within the practitioner's environment. In other words, practitioners may not have the power to influence or change these variables in order to enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

At the country-level, *the ability to deal with South African diversity and challenges* is seen as representative of all country-level variables and as a crucial ability the individual should have.

9.3.5. Overall Conclusion on the Findings

By studying literature, a comprehensive list of variables influencing the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance was identified. The variables contained in this list was categorised into five levels of influence on the practitioner, as suggested in literature.

This was followed by an examination of the perceptions of South African practitioners on the variables identified in literature. Through semi-structured interviews a few variables were identified that were not mentioned in literature and which were then added to the list of variables. Through further research by means of questionnaires, it was determined what the perceptions of South African practitioners are on the variables, and how similar or dissimilar their perceptions were to those suggested in literature. Through statistical analysis the list of variables was re-categorised and the resulting new concepts labelled.

Furthermore, it was found that there was a difference between how strategists viewed the variables affecting them and how they were viewed by managers and technicians. Strategists seemed more moderate in their views, displaying a *big picture* orientation. Also important to

note was the finding that practitioners viewed the variables affecting them in their specific role as more prominent than other variables. All three roles, however, agreed on the influence and importance of selected professional-level variables.

In addition, by means of structural equation modelling, a model depicting the most important variables and their relationships with each other was suggested. This model clearly indicates the interrelatedness of the most important variables and can be used as a guide to increase practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, by focussing on the most important variables, which have the strongest impact on organisational performance.

9.3.6. Specific Research Question Six: Recommendations

Specific research questions six read as follows:

> ***Specific research question 6***
> *Which recommendations can be made to enhance the South African corporate communication practitioner's contribution to organisational performance?*

Firstly recommendations for practitioners will be made, followed by recommendations for professional bodies. Lastly, a recommendation pertaining to the theoretical categorisation of practitioner roles will be made.

9.3.6.1. Recommendations for practitioners

The recommendations for practitioners can be made against the background of the following context statements:

- The corporate communication function in South Africa is becoming more recognised in business, as suggested by the respondents, Steyn's study (2000c:20-43) and the focus on governing stakeholder management in the *King III Report*. In addition business is recognising that public relations contributes to the organisation, not only on the financial level, but also the non-financial level. This situation then provides the opportunity for corporate communication practitioners to take their rightful place, and show and enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

- Practitioners can only contribute to organisational performance when they focus on building and enhancing long-term relationships with key stakeholders, by striving for two-way symmetrical communication through the application of the mixed motive model. Furthermore, while creating and maintaining these relationships, the practitioner must not hesitate to act as the societal consciousness of the organisation – to act as a *thinking heart.*
- Organisations which adhere to the excellence organisational characteristics and generic principles, would allow the practitioner to make a greater contribution to organisational performance.
- As suggested in this study and to some extent implied in literature, practitioners should not view the variables influencing them as only negative (such as stereotyping), in reply to which the practitioner may claim to stand helpless. Some variables can have a positive effect on the practitioner's contribution (for example management's view of communication), while other variables can be managed in order to overcome them (for example, the lack of accreditation). To this end, practitioners should take responsibility for managing the variables influencing them in order to maximise their contribution to organisational performance. The expectation is thus for practitioners to *want to overcome* the variables limiting their contribution to organisational performance, and thus demonstrate a problem-solving and go-getter attitude, with regard to their contribution to organisational performance.

The following general recommendations can then be made from literature, the semi-structured interviews and quantitative data obtained:

- The organisational-stakeholder relationship must be measured in order to show the contribution of the corporate communication function to the organisation's social licence to operate.
- Practitioners must educate themselves about the tasks involved in the corporate communication roles that can be performed.
- Practitioners should strive to play the strategist role, or alternatively support their peers in order to allow others to play this role, as it is through this role that public relations contributes the most to organisational performance.
- In their efforts to enhance their contribution to organisational performance, practitioners would be most effective if they focused their efforts on enhancing the selected variables as mentioned in model three. For instance, practitioners should continually educate and bring themselves up to date with the latest developments, in order to keep their skills updated, understand the importance and implications of CSR

and the *King III Report* to their organisational environment, know how and with whom to lobby, and equip themselves to deal with South African diversity and challenges. Furthermore, practitioners should provide visible leadership in their profession by valuing their own profession, viewing corporate communication as strategic, and striving to involve all stakeholders in their communication by enacting the mixed-motive model. By actively striving for these goals, the practitioner will be able to enhance management's view of communication with the result of avoiding being negatively stereotyped. A generally more professional conduct by practitioners would also naturally enhance the drive towards the accreditation of the function.

More specific recommendations pertaining to each level of variables are the following:

- On the individual-level:
    - Practitioners must have a problem-solving and go-getter attitude, and focus on lifelong learning.
    - Practitioners' should view the public relations function as strategic, and ensure that they have strategic knowledge and skills and act proactively.
    - Practitioners should function, and be educated, within the strategic and relational paradigm. Practitioners should only expect their education to provide them with a good foundation on which to build a career, and to use this education as a base on which to build the career itself.
    - The practitioner should be open-minded, sensitive and act politically correct.
    - Practitioners do not have to be a particular age or gender to be able to contribute to organisational performance.
    - Emotional maturity is of the utmost importance to practitioners.
    - Building a network of knowledgeable people, peers and influencers is important to practitioners.
    - In order to gain credibility the practitioner's behaviour and personality should reinforce one another.
    - Practitioners should try to obtain international experience, however in the absence thereof, gain knowledge about international best practice.
    - Practitioners need business knowledge, as well as insight into the industry in which they work. Specific knowledge of the application of the *King III report* is also needed.
    - Practitioners should know that growing into the strategist role will take time, however this will bring benefits such as a bigger salary, increased communication budget, and ultimately a greater contribution to organisational performance.
    - Practitioners should take action to reconsider and revisit their career goals at various times in their careers, and reach them.

- Practitioners must identify opportunities for communication in their organisation and use these opportunities to show the function's contribution to organisational performance.
- Practitioners should investigate the need to act as a cultural interpreter for the organisation and not merely assume that people living in a multicultural environment are informed on how to be culturally sensitive.

- On the organisational-level
  - Practitioners should pay attention to organisational culture when job hunting, as well as when they are in a specific position. As mentioned above in the general statements, whether the organisation adheres to the Excellence principles, can influence communication and the function's contribution to organisational performance.
  - Practitioners must not view management as the oppressor of corporate communication by default, as in many cases management understands and appreciates the communication function and are waiting for practitioners to step up to the challenge.
  - The practitioner must focus on creating shared expectations with management on the role of communication – thus keeping in close contact with management on their view of the function and educating them about what communication can do.
  - Practitioners should actively search for mentors, or act as mentors.
  - Practitioners should investigate potential employers in order to determine the amount of support for the function and the prominence of the function within the organisation.

- On the industry-level
  - Practitioners must actively increase their skills and knowledge of the industry in which they operate in order to add more value to the organisation.
  - Practitioners should, as far as realistically possible, communicate stakeholders' views and opinions to management and take them into account when strategising communication. This can most successfully be achieved by adhering to the mixed motive model.

- On the country-level
  - Practitioners need to understand, be informed about and adapt to the challenges of the South African business environment.

  - Practitioners should be aware that in South Africa, practitioners in the managerial and strategist roles, might still be expected to also enact technical tasks.

- On the professional-level
  - Practitioners should at all times be ethical in their conduct and demand this from their peers.
  - Practitioners should provide visible leadership in the profession by educating management on the contribution that public relations can make to organisational performance and speaking out about their success.
  - Practitioners must limit their own actions that do not promote the function and should take pride in the function.

9.3.6.2. Recommendations to professional bodies

Professional bodies should be cognisant of the following, as the context for the recommendations to follow:

- In general, it would seem that very few practitioners are members of a/any professional body. Furthermore, practitioners generally seem to view professional bodies in a negative light. This could be due to various factors, such as the fact that the benefits of membership of a professional body are not clear to practitioners, or that the professional body's offering is lacking in the eyes of the practitioners.
- There is a need amongst practitioners for contact with fellow practitioners in order to share experience and knowledge.
- There is a role to play for professional bodies in terms of advancing the profession.

The following recommendations for professional bodies can then be made:

- In providing education for practitioners, ensure that the CPD training is appropriate for practitioners active in the profession. Furthermore it could be valuable to align training with the expectations of practitioners performing the roles of technicians, managers and strategists. Also ensure that the training is set within the relational and strategic public relations paradigms.
- Limit educators to those who have business knowledge and experience within the relational and strategic public relations paradigms.
- Implement a mentorship system that allows well established practitioners, operating within the relational and strategic paradigms, to offer themselves as mentors. The

programme should also be structured in such a way as to show the benefit of joining the programme for both the mentor and protégé.

- Enhance the profile of the profession, as well as the image of the professional body, within the business environment by empowering the practitioner to provide visible corporate communication leadership in his/her organisation. This should then also create the need for accreditation within business, thereby creating the pull factors for accreditation. By also enhancing the profile of the profession, one hopes that it would encourage more males to join the profession.
- Professional bodies should work with academia to become shared custodians of information and knowledge on the field of public relations. In this way the information should then also become more available to practitioners.

9.3.6.3. A theoretical recommendation on role categorisation

From the results of this study, a recommendation on the theoretical categorisation of the role of the corporate communication practitioner, can also be made.

Traditionally the actions performed by practitioners in their daily work has been grouped through research and categorised into certain roles. The categories were developed through an examination of literature and empirical tests that asked practitioners to report on what they do and CEOs on what they expect from practitioners (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:221; Steyn, 2000c:20-43).

In order, then, to establish the actual role performed by the respondents (see section 6.6.5.) for the purposes of this study, the tasks completed, time allocated to the tasks and the most important activities over the past three months were taken into account. However, as alluded to in section 6.6.1. on the tasks completed by respondents and in section 6.6.2. on the time allocated to tasks performed by the respondents, there is the possibility of respondents enacting more than one role.

Although literature tries to accommodate this problem by classifying practitioners into the role they perform the most frequently (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:223), other authors such as Moss *et al.* (2000:292, 300) argue that their study supports the findings that practitioners combine elements of roles in their daily work. Practitioners thus need the flexibility to combine roles to match the context at hand in order to assist the organisation in adapting to the environment (Bassett, 1996:38). Specifically, in South Africa, it might be necessary for practitioners to

perform a combination of the three roles (strategist, manager and technician) for various reasons - organisations may be limited to only one corporate communication practitioner who has to perform all three roles, or practitioners are expected to train other practitioners when they progress to the next level of role playing. Clear categorisation of roles is thus not as simple as first suggested.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that the roles that the practitioner can perform should be explained as a three dimensional continuum (see figure 9.2.), implying that a practitioner gravitates more towards one role or combination of roles. This could then explain why one practitioner can perform tasks from more than one or even two roles, within their current job. A practitioner can be expected to write a press release, manage the public relations plan and provide strategic input – playing technical, managerial and strategist roles simultaneously.

In the researcher's suggestion that practitioners thus may not perform well or perform poorly within a particular role (for example, manager), as could sometimes be argued when too many other tasks are added to the practitioner's job and the current role expectation is not met. A practitioner can perform 5% strategic, 70% managerial and 25% technical tasks and according to that classification be *performing well* – indicating that he/she is a practitioner that contributes well to organisational performance. However, when the same person is evaluated against purely management tasks, as the norm for a *manager*, he/she could be classified as performing poorly.

The role continuum suggested will clearly indicate which role(s) are performed, to what degree, and practitioners' performance should be assessed against this specific *mix* of roles, for a more fair assessment of his/her performance This approach will be helpful in terms of planning the practitioner's career progress and enhancing his/her role and the function in order to establish enhanced contribution to organisational performance.

Mismatches between the organisation's expectation and the practitioner's role(s) performed can be established and corrected following the continuum approach. For instance a practitioner seen by management as a 100% public relations *manager* and classified as a poorly performing public relations manager, might be spending too much time on strategist or technical tasks. Therefore, in order to match the practitioner's role performance to the organisation's expectations, the practitioner's role playing needs to be reassessed in order to determine if it is realistic to expect this person to only perform the managerial role, within an environment that might demand multi-role playing.

It could also be argued that such a role continuum would offer more nuanced results in public relations research, where the practitioner role forms part of the constructs considered in the study. However, more research is needed to verify the suggested role categorisation continuum.

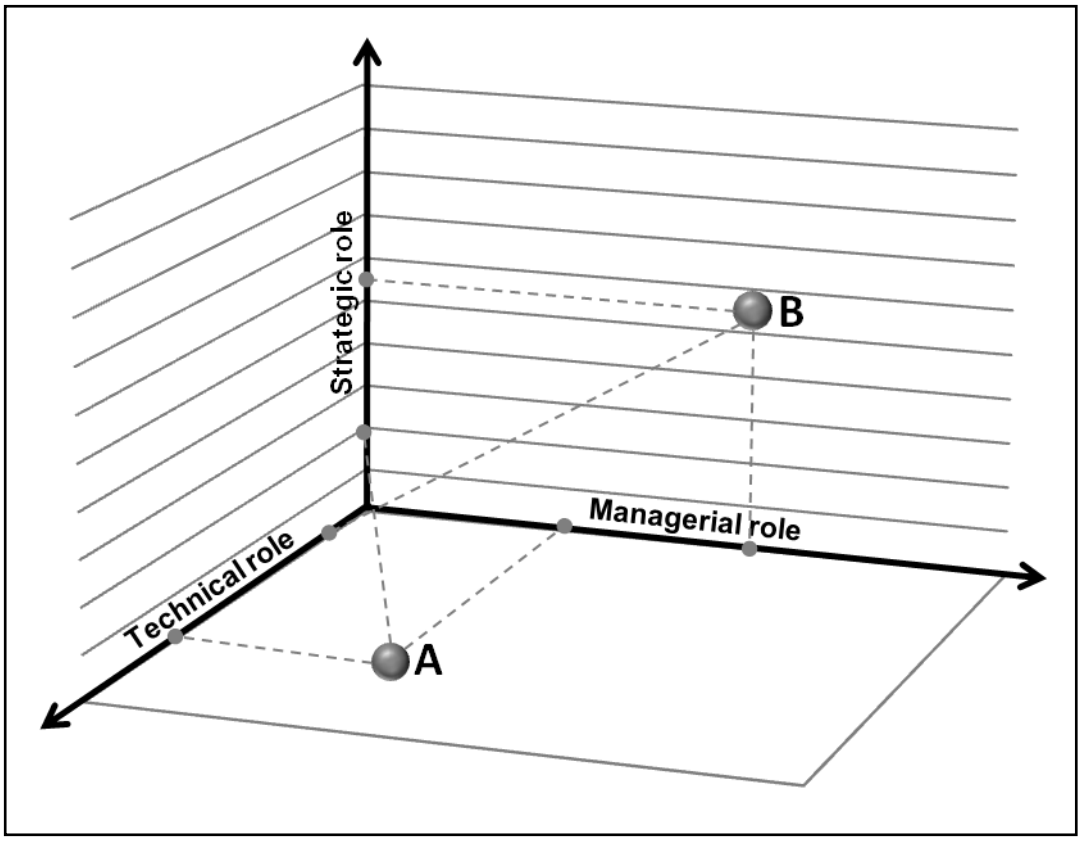


Figure 9.2: Representation of simultaneous roles

(Author's own conceptualisation)

9.4. ANSWERING THE GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The General research question read as follows:

How can South African corporate communication practitioners enhance their contribution to organisational performance?

By answering all the Specific research questions above, the General research question can also be answered.

Public relations practitioners must acknowledge that the value of the function can only be proven when the function contributes to organisational performance. However, contributing to organisational performance offers some challenges to the practitioner.

Furthermore, practitioners need to acknowledge that the South African environment poses unique challenges and offers unique opportunities for public relations to excel.

Therefore, South African corporate communication practitioners should understand that there are various variables influencing their contribution to organisational performance. However, at the same time, they should also understand that the influence of these variables can be overcome. The practitioner should then also be willing to take charge of these variables and manage them, in order to enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

As suggested from model three, created through structural equation modelling, practitioners should focus on enhancing the prioritised individual, industry, professional, country and organisational variables, contained in the model in order to enhance their contribution to organisational performance.

Public relations practitioners should also acknowledge that, as their contribution to organisational performance improves, so will the standing of the profession within the business environment. This, in turn, could lead to a greater possibility of accreditation taking place within the profession.

9.5. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study makes several contributions to the public relations body of knowledge:

- Grunig (2001:4) argued that the first question to guide the Excellence Study was “How, why, and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives?”. As the study progressed, it was apparent that the question needed to be expanded to include: “How must public relations be practiced and the communication function organised for it to contribute the most to organisational effectiveness?”. This study examined this question from the

practitioners' perspective in order to identify variables assisting or hindering them. Whereas the Excellence Study studied the phenomenon from the normative point of view, this study examined the problem from a practical, and practitioner point of view, aligned with the norms developed by the Excellence Study, thereby offering a practical solution to enhance practitioners' contribution to organisational performance.

- This study furthermore studied the above question as applicable in South Africa and created new knowledge for the unique South African environment in which there is a need for more research on the practice of the profession (ref. O'Connor & Falconi, 2003:10, 34). The study adds to the statement by Grunig (2006a) that the excellence guidelines are found globally, however adapted in their application for each country, thereby continuing with the discussion toward the formulation of a generic global model for corporate communication which is adapted to each country. This study therefore adds to the information on the application of the global public relations knowledge to the specific South African setting by offering a model of the main variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance.
- As explained in section 1.3.1.1. this study provides information on the South African public relations landscape, by overcoming the explained sampling limitations of the previous studies of Petersen *et al.* (2002:1-29), Holtzhausen (2005:407-416), De Wet *et al.* (2008:1-31), and Niemann-Struweg and Meintjies (2008: 224-229) on the South African public relations landscape. These sampling limitations are argued to influence their obtained results in terms of size and scope. The current study, however, include a large sample of practitioners from all the top performing organisations in South Africa, which are both members and non-members of the professional public relations organisations. The resulting response rate of 19.9%, which is considered very good (see section 4.3.4.5.), confirms the wealth of information gained from 262 practitioners. Therefore the results obtained can offer a more trustworthy account of the current South African public relations situation.
- The study has practical relevance for communication practitioners, communication students embarking on communication careers, organisations employing corporate communication practitioners and for professional corporate communication bodies in the function's contribution to organisational performance, thereby solving real world problems. The recommendations suggested, will empower practitioners to show their value to organisations individually and collectively as a corporate communication department.

- A profession requires, amongst others, a strong body of knowledge. The study, therefore, adds to the professionalisation of the function, as information on the actions and behaviour of practitioners in South Africa was gained.
- In addition, this study offers information on race related issues in the South African public relations environment, which were not previously researched.
- The study contributes to the definition of *public relations practitioners* and adds to the body of knowledge of how practitioners should be defined by also investigating and making a suggestion on an area for new research on public relations practitioners' roles. The suggestion of categorising practitioner roles in terms of a three-dimensional continuum, could offer a more appropriate approach to practitioner underperformance, as well as enhance shared expectations of the function with management. This method of categorising practitioner roles may also assist in bringing the role expectations of management closer to the actual role performed by the practitioner.
- Specifically then, the study provides a consolidated list of categorised and empirically verified variables influencing practitioners' contribution to organisational performance, for use in future studies.
- Through structural equation modelling, the study provides an answer to the relationship and prioritisation of the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance. A model depicting the most important variables and the relationship between these variables was created, which indicates to practitioners where most of their efforts should be focused in enhancing their contribution to organisational performance.
- In discussing the paradigms used in the study, a new definition for organisational-stakeholder relationships was suggested, which separates the definition and assumptions previously grouped into a single definition of the term in literature.
- The study illustrates the use of both multiple paradigms and, as a research design, methodological triangulation, applied within a complex environment and investigating a complex research problem.
- The study illustrates the usefulness of structural equation modelling within the public relations discipline.

9.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From this research recommendations for future research can be made. Ideally future research should focus on:

- research on the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, per role in various other environments than examined in this study, such as the non-profit or SME environments.
- working towards a greater understanding of the variables influencing practitioners. This study suggested a model, however, more research is needed to further verify the model and expand on the understanding of the model.
- obtaining sufficient quantitative data to develop a model of the variables influencing the practitioners at each role level. Thereby developing models of the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance at the technician, manager and strategist levels, seperately.
- the current state of public relations in South Africa. However, the studies need to not only focus on professional body members, but should include non-members as well, in order to be representative of practitioners active in South Africa.
- the role ambiguity of public relations practitioners. This is needed in order to understand if being classified into a single or multiple roles, is more applicable to South African practitioners.
- determining the difference between the perceived and actual influence of variables on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance.

9.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The data for this study were only gathered from practitioners in large profitable organisations in South Africa that were listed on *South Africa's Top 300 National Company List* (Fletcher, 2007:1-330) and the *Financial Mail Top 200 Companies List* (Williams, 2005:1-168). Thus the study does not provide insight into the variables influencing practitioners in other environments, such as in small and medium enterprises, or in government, nor does it suggest that the variables might be similar for such practitioners.

By using SEM in this study to construct a model of the variables influencing the practitioner, one needs to keep in mind that this is not necessarily the only possible model to illustrate these variables. More research is needed to further verify the suggested model. However,

this study used the suggested model to make sense of the data and start a discussion on the variables influencing practitioners in South Africa in contributing to organisational performance.

In addition, the actual variation in the practitioner's contribution to organisational performance, as a result of the influence per variable, could not be established. However, this was not the aim of the study, as the study focused on the respondent's perceptions of the variables and the relationship between the variables, which influenced practitioners' contribution to organisational performance. It does, however, need to be kept in mind that it is possible that the respondents' perceptions of the influence of variables and the actual influence of variables on the practitioner in contributing to organisational performance, could differ. Further studies to investigate this difference are needed.

Although it is suggested that practitioners may be performing more than one role at a time, this study could not accommodate that information in the statistical analysis. This is due to the fact that the researcher chose to use the roles of strategist, manager and technician as identified and verified in South Africa. Furthermore too few respondents could be categorised into enacting more than one role, limiting statistical analysis in this regard. A larger sample of practitioners would thus be needed in order to ensure enough respondents to fall into those categories.

9.8. FINAL CONCLUSION

This study started out with a statement on the value and importance of public relations. The problem that public relations does not always deliver on the promise of contributing to the greater good of society and the performance of the organisation, was given as a reason for the necessity for such correctional and motivational statements in order to have the profession acknowledged.

By investigating the variables influencing practitioners in contributing to organisational performance, the most important reasons why public relations does not keep its promise of contributing to the greater good of society and, as argued in this study, the performance of the organisation, could be better understood and described.

It would seem that the onus thus lies on the practitioner to manage the variables influencing them in order to maximise their contribution to organisational performance. In essence the solution to this problem can be found in the following quote:

> *We don't have to travel to other disciplines to find our diamonds. Public relations is an important discipline if you're good at it. So get to be good at it.*
>
> Grunig, 2006b:7

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