INTRODUCTION

At the core of public relations is a desire to establish relationships, both inside and outside of an organization (Grunig, 1999). It is the connection with the surrounding community that allows an organization to prosper. Yet, the assumption is that public relations practitioners actually know how to build these priceless relationships, not just maintain them. The reciprocity and sharing of information allows for a balance to be struck among all stakeholders. This concept relies on the public being well-informed and actively involved in providing feedback. The information-sharing creates value for all parties, and this maximization of inputs is the central tenet to the two-way concept of communication. People want to feel connected to a business or organization, and they want to know that their interests are being upheld (Rawlins, 2008). Meanwhile, businesses want to share information and use feedback to improve their overall operations. Both parties are ultimately enriched from this long-term relationship, just as two people would find fulfillment in a meaningful friendship or personal relationship.

A business or organization works like an organic being; each department and function affects the larger whole. This is why integrated communication is so important, but to be effective, the public relations practitioner has to know how to actually build relationships with people. All too often the focus of the field has centered on writing press releases, organizing campaigns, and speaking at press conferences (Cutlip et al, 2000). These
activities require a great amount of poise and communication effectiveness, and all of these traits can be trained and cultivated with the right people and environment. But the key to building a true connection with people is to focus on feelings, not facts. Even though public relations practitioners are meant to be many things, at their core they are extensions of the organization as a whole. Ideally, they should be walking and talking representatives for whomever they work for. Their jobs should not start and end with a well-planned and rehearsed speech, but rather, it should be a way of life. But this is difficult to attain when the role of public relations is still hard to define, and therefore, it is hard for practitioners to operate with a complete belief in their company and profession.

It is the core consistency and belief that allows some people to be more advanced at interpersonal skills than others. Those who are extroverted seem like they can talk and bond with virtually anyone, while introverted individuals remain less involved in their interactions. The difference between the two is like that of a company that is firmly rooted in its principles versus one that is not. Extroverts operate on a sense of internal competence and credibility that allows them to feel, rather than think, during an interaction. Meanwhile, introverts are like an organization that is simply expelling facts and information without finding ways to link it into a congruent whole. But even the most extroverted of people may fail to make a connection with another, simply because the other person can sense inconsistencies (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993).

While the ability to make friends may come naturally for some individuals rather than others, the success of an organization is dependent on keeping in close contact with the stakeholders. Most public relations communication patterns work on a foundation of
routines, just like interpersonal skills. But the assumption in public relations is that the respondents are exerting an equal amount of energy and investment as the acting party.

A lot of social interaction relies on one party being introduced to another, a set of exchanges occur, and then a relationship of some sort develops. From a scientific standpoint, the emphasis has been on the verbal component, but this is only a small part of human interaction. What is said is not nearly as important as how it is said, the subtle way that one manifests his or her innermost thoughts and desires in their tonality, gestures, and overall demeanor.

To be effective, public relations has to adopt a more realistic interpersonal model to shape their internal mode in all social contexts, not just one-on-one but all levels of interaction. Rather than rely on routines, which are studied logically and analytically, there has to be a restructuring towards the congruent whole. People respond better to feelings, evoked and reciprocated from people and groups they trust, and this is where the level of influence and power stems. The true weight of relationships comes from the perceived human element involved.

Numerous theories have focused on the stages of interpersonal development and how they are parallel to the relationship between an individual and organization. These programs are inherently flawed because they place a great amount of emphasis on verbal communication in dialogue, not fully identifying the elusive obvious. The verbal component has been at the core of society since the dawn of civilization, but it has been too cross-analyzed as being a means to an end, not a beginning.

The difficulty with any interaction is that there is a level of anxiety and uncertainty that exists for both parties. In interpersonal terms, one person often holds more perceived
power than the other, and so rather than share on an equal level, one party has to bring the other into a level of comfort before full sharing can occur. This is what public relations is, using the components of a social system to bridge the emotional gap, bringing people into a shared construct of reality. Once this happens, a reciprocal level of communication occurs, but only if a significant amount of trust is achieved.

The fear of instability in an interaction is what creates uncertainty in the initial stages of relationship development (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991), and it is only in revealing greater quality of information, not necessarily quantity, that a connection can be made. Facts are objectives measures, they are not emotional triggers, and on their own they do little to spark an investment between two people. A new level of value has to be built and created on an actual personal level, not just superficially. The goal is to create value in the relationship, regardless of the level, such that both parties are enriched and coincide in their view of reality. For public relations professionals, this means that they have to hold onto their own credibility and belief, one that is strong enough to evoke a positive response, one of trust.

When two people meet, there are several phases of friendship formation that occur (Zeggelink, 1993). Each one relies on a sequence of information sharing and reciprocity, with the goal of reducing uncertainty and bonding. Judgments are made with startling speed, and there are many alternatives and interferences that can disrupt the initial impression.

What is needed is a reshaping of the paradigm of public relations to move past the traditional model of reciprocity and instead focus on the overall congruence and credibility required of the messenger. This is only possible in the mental embodiment of
what a public relations professional is, even against the model of who they are perceived to be.

Concepts like leadership, public speaking, and event management can all be learned and practiced, just as they are in many professions, but the real sense of trust comes from people who believe in what they do, something much harder to teach. Relationship-building is primarily a component of lessening uncertainty by way of dialogue, self-disclosure, and the mindful awareness of all interactions, taking into account the organic structure of society. More than that is the need to establish what public relations actually is, even if it is just a conceptual framework, and examine how practitioners adversely manifest the instability of the field into their relationships. A firm connection occurs by way of stability, trust, and credibility in the source.

A focus has to be given to the conditioning that has shaped the current paradigm of public relations. The two-way model effectively skips over the more weighted level of sharing that is the responsibility of the public relations personnel, with a truly reciprocal system occurring at later stages. A measure of personal control and role development has to be achieved in order to be a positive embodiment of the message. In combination with the principles of rhetoric and social intuition, social dynamics or rapport building in interpersonal relationships is very much akin and analogous to that of an organization and its customers. The goal is to ingrain public relations professionals with the interpersonal mindset necessary to effectively communicate their message, build rapport, establish trust, and encourage long-term relationships to actually flourish.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetoric & Dialogue

It was not until the eight century B.C. that written forms of communication became widespread. Prior to this new technology, oral communication was the primary means of conveyance. Borden (1971) takes note of the rise of rhetorical communication in the early days of Greek civilization. The spoken word and those who could do it well were highly sought after, because their words had impact, and those that possessed the trait conveyed the history and news for entire generations. As such, they carried with them a high degree of reputation and admiration, simply because they were messengers, speakers of the truth. To be successful at the job meant longevity and a reputation, as Socrates exemplified.

Socrates’ dialectic communication used questions to evoke answers that coincided with the logic and framing of his arguments. But the subtlety of the method is the proportion of dialogue used and the perceived level that occurred. The person delivering the argument or message had to take hold of the spoken word, using the momentum and power of his emotional reality to craft a viewpoint for others. While the responders would provide some level of feedback, this was more in line with giving them a sense of investment, however slight, in the largely narrative-based discussion. Borden (1971) notes that Greek society is where public relations found its roots; placing emphasis on the individual as having power and credibility by his words and sense of being.
The writings of Ron Cullen (1997) focused on how rhetorical communication evolved into the current western tradition, with the production of messages being theorized and learned as a practical art form. The study of rhetoric had two primary missions: public discourse and production. The intended effect of composing an essay or speaking was to guide others to a prescribed outcome. But the result is not inevitable, it is dependent on the importance and perceived power of the speaker, as well as the emotional connection forged in the manner of speaking and choice of words. Essentially, gifted rhetoricians are able to construct a shared reality for others that consist of ideas, but this is only possible if what they say is congruent and truthful.

Rhetorical situations and developments are constructions of choice, partly through the speaker and in the listener’s receptivity to how the information fits in with his or her view of the world. The social actor uses the opportunity to express their stance on an issue using word triggers and emotional intelligence that, when done in congruence with exterior elements, redefines a mental map of reality (Cullen, 1997).

Stoker & Tusinski (2006) argue that the dissemination of information is contingent on the level of trust that can be established, not just the amount of information conveyed. The outright goal of symmetrical communication is to allow an actual dialogue to commence, one where both parties share information and allow for mutual improvement and understanding. The issue of contention is that this model is too dependent on the assumption of a relationship existing. When two people have an established relationship, they share information readily, often overflowing one topic into the next. But this level of comfort takes time and requires a great amount of trust and sincerity before both parties divulge evenly. What is often the case is that one party has to spearhead the
movement of the conversation and make a greater number and quality of disclosures before the other person is ready to invest. When this level is reached, then quid pro quo occurs. Yet this process takes time, with one party revealing while the other disseminates; allowing the relationship to be built on integrity. But to be successful at actually having a long-term connection, there has to be a higher level of credibility and emotional connection involved, rather than just the exchange of factual information

**Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

Berger & Calabrese (1975) identify three stages of relationship building: Entry – demographic content and basic introductions. Personal stage – attitudes toward certain issues, personal problems revealed. Exit stage – commitment to future interaction and later continuation. Each stage builds on the previous, with favorable attitudes being met with additional information from the other party. The more that is shared and coincided with a person’s own beliefs, values, and ideals, the more likely that a friendship will develop. Yet this process is not a logical one, despite the intention of Berger. It is an accumulated processing of information on one another, the way someone says something and the sense of emotional vigor behind it, rather than a robotic repetition of information. But what is clear from the article is that, when two people meet, the aim is to reduce the amount of uncertainty that exists in the situation. There is a level of awkward apprehension, a nervousness of unpredictability that has to be cast aside quickly and easily.

McCroskey and Richmond (1991) focused on escalating the level of verbal and nonverbal communication and using these to lessen the burden of uncertainty. With less uncertainty in the interaction, there is a greater sense of intimacy, and the investment in
the long-term is much higher. The more two people express themselves, the more likely that a positive relationship will develop. The primary perception of interactions is that they are happening by choice, but really there is a great degree of habit and routine coming into play. The exchange of information has crafted itself through years of social conditioning into acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and so the resulting exchange is the path of least resistance. It does not necessarily mean that the two people will share a connection, but it will navigate them with the least potential for harm. As such, they effectively run on autopilot, using little cognitive involvement so that they show few deviations from their mental script.

The initial impression is very important to the success of the interaction. The human brain is incredibly fast in assessing the verbal, nonverbal, and almost ethereal essence of another person or thing. Before a friendship can be established, a lot of information has to be shared and processed. As communication occurs, Zegglink (1993) identifies that individuals make more stable and accurate predictions of another’s personality. The more predictable they become, owing to a sense of credibility and consistency, the more likely that uncertainty is reduced. If the expectations of similarity are positive, then subtle individuations of friendship will occur, and this allows for long-term efforts to move forward. This rapport requires some demonstration of value from both parties to allow a sustainable level of interaction to occur. If one holds more power than the other and persists in holding onto that value, then there is an imbalance that limits the sense of connection.

The basic theories about why people experience fear or anxiety in communication may be placed into three categories: excessive activation, inappropriate cognitive
process, and inadequate communication skills. Excessive activation occurs when the concept or moment of interaction is mentally over-emphasized, and so the person is physiologically overreacting to the expectation of performance (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985). What is needed to change a person’s mind is cognitive restructuring, which is a method used to overcome communication apprehension and social phobias.

Behnke and Beatty (1977) performed a study in which participants gave a public speech and then were asked to indicate the level of anxiety they felt during its presentation. The speakers’ heart rate and attitude perception were also measured. What the study indicated is that the lack of predictability in a new social setting elevates anxiety, and so a wall of disclosure is put up. It is this separation of self from the other that inhibits a relationship from developing and places more power into the hands of the more comfortable party. For the public speaker, if he is emotionally charged, he can control the emotional frequency of his audience, rather than letting their reactions determine his mood.

The willingness to communicate (WTC) scale is a self-reporting instrument that gauges the behavioral tendencies across various situations. Research relating to the impact of WTC in communication has been connected to a variety of variables, everything ranging from shyness, unwillingness to communicate, quietness, and social anxiety. Three models of research have been employed: direct observation, measurement of predisposition, simulation of talkativeness variation with assessment of outcomes (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993).

Introversion and extroversion are names for different personality frameworks for individuals. Extreme extroverts are more people-oriented, while extreme introverts may
feel less inclined to communicate with others and have lower perceived value in the communication process. Introverts tend to be less social than extroverts (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993). The distinction of personality can play a role in the individual’s perceptions of his/her communication competence. Communication apprehension is a person’s level of fear or anxiety associated with communicating with other people. A person’s communication apprehension is the single largest predictor of a person’s WTC. But the distinction between introverts and extroverts is over-emphasized in the field of academic study. What the extrovert has learned is simply a greater sense of ease in conversing with other people. They have been exposed to a greater number of social situations and had positive outcomes from those experiences, enough so that they are able to establish connections quite quickly. Part of their ability to do so manifests in the way they share information with others.

The introvert tends to look at the conversation as an exchange of information that happens by way of formality, tic for tack. The extrovert has a greater propensity to divulge information early on, using the momentum of their self disclosures and cross-topics to convey a lot about who they are in a short period of time. What this does is show their level of transparency, but they also give the other party a chance to contribute, just not in the same proportion. A conversation with greater proportion allotted to one over the other may seem arrogant or controlling, but the perceived sense of being back-and-forth makes the other person seem more involved than they actually are (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993).

**Interpersonal Training**
Roloff’s (1981) work examines the misconception of interpersonal communication as being common sense, when it is actually a fairly complex process. With the meeting of two strangers, it is assumed that the actions and reactions are naturally determined, and that the academic value in teaching any behaviors related to the subject is quite low. But the reality is that common sense does not coincide with reality, and most interpersonal processes operate with very little self-awareness. The reason partly stems from Homan’s operant psychology approach; in which a person’s behavior can be predicted from the knowledge of outcomes produced in prior settings. With each encounter, a person makes a mental record of what worked and what did not, and this database of information allows for pre-programmed responses to be available. If certain cues are recognized, behavior that has been positively reinforced is exhibited. When a person contributes something worthwhile to another, then they are likely to receive something of value in return.

One of the oldest issues with apprehension about speaking in interpersonal and public settings is a lack of proper training to improve these skills. Treatment programs have focused on three areas: systematic desensitization (visualization/meditation), cognitive restructuring (self affirmations and feedback), and skills training (speech classes). Each one of these methods has positive and negative aspects, but the one of chief focus is the skills training concept. Speech classes in high school and college have been largely ineffective. Meanwhile, studies involving subjects doing such goal-directed activities as increasing assertiveness and asking for a date have shown major improvements in communication behavior and a modest reduction in apprehension (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985).
If training is to be successful, a client must set specific goals that will help him or her develop the necessary skill sets for various situations. Well-learned patterns of behavior in social interaction are extremely difficult to change. Attempts at developing new skills, especially in terms of behavior modification, can be met with a great amount of resistance and embarrassment (Eisler & Frederiksen, 1980). The author asserts that there is no single best way to train social skills. Videotape and film demonstrations, mental imagery, behavior rehearsal, and various reinforcement mechanisms are commonly used, but there is not definitive method of instruction. Of modeling and role-playing are the most powerful impact on a person’s development and these can greatly speed up the process of mental and physical reprocessing. Understanding of the information is not enough; people have to actually rehearse these scenarios in training before they can be applied to real world situations (Eisler & Frederiksen, 1980).

Zeggelink’s (1993) work explores several theories of relationship development. One of the most important is social penetration theory, which focuses on the stages of friendship and personality emergence. Social penetration theory revolves around four key stages. Orientation – the initial meeting when only small pieces of information and conveyances of personality are brought forth. Exploration affective exchange – a wider breadth of personality is made accessible and the possibility of friendship emerges. Affective exchange – each party gets to know more about the others’ personality. Stable exchange – both individuals express who they really are and their full personalities are displayed. The process is one of equalizing the exchange between two parties to a point where the quality of information has been matched. Understanding the process is a key part of consciously adapting one’s interpersonal skills into a value-driven model. Simply
exchanging is not enough; it has to be revealed alongside personality and internal workings, the feelings and emotional connection between the two parties.

Sacks et al (1978) identified the mechanisms involved in taking turns in conversation, especially in initial meetings. Socially organized activities present turns as a way of management and evaluation, with value being conveyed with each pass and an attempt being made to balance contributions. Turn taking is like an ordered sequence game that is hard to predict, but there are at least fourteen main components of conversation that are readily identified:

1. speaker change recurs, or at least occurs
2. overwhelmingly, one part talks at a time
3. occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief
4. transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap between them are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions
5. turn order is not fixed, but varies
6. turn size is not fixed, but varies
7. length of conversation is not fixed, specified in advance
8. what parties say is not fixed, specified in advance
9. relative distribution of turns is not fixed, specified in advance
10. number of parties can change
11. talk can be continuous or discontinuous
12. turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker. Parties may self-select, in starting to talk
various turn-constructional units are employed. Turns can be one word long, or
for example, they can be sentential in length.

repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obvious are
available for use. For example, if two parties find themselves talking at the same
time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing.

What is indicated from Sacks’ (1978) analysis of turn-taking is that the process is not
necessarily predictable, but there are socially accepted modes of action. But breaking
down the process purely on a quantitative measure of roles and exchanges misses the
subtext that is occurring within each level. The verbal and nonverbal subtleties are what
indicate the attentiveness of both parties, not just the perceived interaction. This is more
of an internal system of social and emotional intelligence, one that relies on verbal
exchanges, but it is a more long-term model of behavior.

Mindful and Mindless Communication

Giffin and Patton (1974) say that people interact with others because they want to, and
even if uncertainty enters into it, there is still an interpersonal imperative. When two
people meet, they both carry their own needs for interaction, and being able to perceive
those needs greatly helps in the forming of a relationship. Both parties have to engage in
needs identification and potential satisfaction, as well as a personal assessment of one’s
ability to provide value to the friendship. Often people are unaware of the needs and
demands they have on others, and so manipulative behaviors go unchecked until someone
calls them to attention. This is part of human relations laboratory training programs;
people increase their awareness of interpersonal needs as well as understand and interpret
the needs of others. According to the authors,
“Our interpersonal needs usually take one or more of these three forms: 1. need to be included in social interaction with others; 2. need to reach agreements with others on who is going to control whom under what conditions; and 3. need to give and receive affection” (32).

In relationships, the potential costs to both parties include time, energy, embarrassment, love, anger, and various other psychological factors. If the relationship is able to stabilize, then these costs are met with positive rewards, but if this is not the case, then the relationship could dissolve (Giffin & Patton, 1974). Fritz Heider (1958) had looked at the development of attribution motives in his system of naïve analysis for interpersonal actions. In describing the placement of motives to the actions of others, he focused on two concepts: The capability of the person in achieving their purpose or intention, and is the person trying to achieve it? The accuracy with which motives and intentions are perceived is an issue in need of greater research. However, people still try to guess the reasons for the behavior of others.

Burgoon et al (2000) focused on how communication difficulties and advantages can arise from a state of apparent mindlessness-mindfulness. This concept relies on keeping an open stance when interacting with others; allowing them opportune time to talk while the receiver acts as an impartial yet attuned listener. However, when certain social cues are missed in any interaction, whether they are verbal or nonverbal, then the relationship or connection could quickly dissolve. The ability to correctly perceive, understand, and reciprocate specific indicators allows for interpersonal communication to succeed.

When people have the right state of mind, they are more likely to perceive messages and then incorporate those aspects into their lives. In addition to mindfulness growing
out of naturally arising features of interaction, verbal and nonverbal message elements can be manipulated intentionally to elicit more thoughtful, creative, and flexible states of mind. Communication that is planned, processed, creative, strategic, flexible, and/or reason-based would seem to qualify as mindful, whereas communication that is reactive, superficially processed, routine, and rigid would fall toward the mindless end of the continuum (Burgoon et al., 2000).

James McCroskey (1968) says that, in one-on-one communication, both persons serve as senders and receivers. Feedback is provided on a reciprocal basis, and messages are encoded and decoded by each party with their respective turns. The cycle is a perpetual one, and it may begin at any point. Intentional communication greatly differs from serendipitous in that the communicator can tailor meaning to stimulate the mind of a receiver, and their efforts of rhetoric and conveyance are motivated by directing the other person’s responses. This is more of an applied measurement activity, not simply reacting to what has been said but to actively plan for and prepare statements that will result in a desired outcome. Rather than succumb to mindlessness and a resignation towards routine back-and-forth politeness, the model of conveyance is more geared towards achieving friendship. However, mistakes are often made, but success can often still be achieved. This is more of serendipitous communication, but even if accidents befall one of the communicators, he or she can recuperate immediately if they are well-equipped with the proper tactical mechanisms of reassertion.

People differ in the amount of time they spend reflecting on the internal states and first impressions they create in others. Wegner and Vallacher (1977) say that human beings are naïve psychologists, and they create their own theories about social reality. A factor
analysis of responses to a 23 item questionnaire indicated self-consciousness composed of three dimensions: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. People are often unaware of the theories they employ, and they tend to overestimate their personal control in situations where outcomes occur purely by chance. Most people operate in a relatively mindless state. How aware a person is depends greatly on the repeated experiences in that type of situation or activity. If the activity is more engaging than normal, then the person will deviate from previously developed mental scripts for dealing with certain situations. Social cognition only comes into play when someone encounters a situation that is beyond their normal guidelines for responses (Roloff & Berger, 1982).

**Self-Disclosure**

Disclosure means making known or revealing information, and self-disclosure is the act of showing one’s self, usually verbally, for others to perceive. Face-to-face interactions automatically disclose numerous facts of self; sex, approximate age, weight, height, and possibly even mood. Interacting with the other person discloses even more verbal and nonverbal signatures – eye contact, body movement, proximity, and especially tone of voice and content of messages. The verbal component is perceived as being synonymous with self-disclosure, and it further refers to private information that is selectively revealed only under certain circumstances. Often a dyadic effect is reached when both parties reveal information in a reciprocal fashion. From a Jungian standpoint, what a person says offers a view into their inner workings, and on some level they want other people to know things about themselves. Having self-disclosure flexibility means
that a person is more aware and adaptable in what they reveal; the demands of the situation affect how much a person is willing to reveal (Chelune, 1979).

When two people meet, they have a tendency to hold back more personal information; divulging matters on a reciprocal basis. The one-on-one connection that is inherent in the conversation means that some level of openness will occur, and certain barriers will be eliminated. Independent observers feel overly conscious of their own walls and lack of willingness to reciprocate, but the actual members of the exchange have lower levels of protection. Despite this, high levels of self-disclosure, particularly disparaging information, when presented too early, are often met with a more closed-off response from the other member. This gap can be overcome in time, but if the issues are too uncomfortable, then the conversation may be entirely one-sided. This supposes that the model of communication is built on a level of comfort being achieved and low to high information sharing (Weisel & King, 2007).

The article by Charles Berger (2005) highlights the increasing levels of self-disclosure that occur between two individuals. This dyadic effect means that, as one party reveals personal details, the other person will likely reciprocate. This enters into the later stages of communication after comfort has been established. Studies have revealed that most one-on-one communication is formulaic, with verbal and nonverbal responses being routine. Superficial variations are made to accommodate and adjust for interactions with new parties, but individuals hold onto successful communication components that have been part of their behavior. The meeting of two strangers still generates spontaneous communication threads, but both sides already have expectations on how the other will
react to certain signals or indicators. The reason for this is not insidious, but rather, it is simply a way of ensuring proper message conveyance towards achievable goals.

According to Derlega & Grzelak (1979), the theoretical analysis of self-disclosure is based on two principles – functional and normative. Functional refers to the value or effectiveness of self-disclosure as perceived by both parties. Normative focuses on the conditions and social norms in which it is acceptable for people to reveal personal information. Ultimately, self-disclosure consists of five components: expression, self-clarification, social validation, relationship development, and social control. The most important areas in terms of this study are social validation and relationship development. Social validation means that people look to social reality to obtain feedback and validate their self-concepts. An individual shapes the appropriateness of their attitudes, belief, and values based on other people’s perceptions. Relationship development means that the information conveyed by the target conveys knowledge about the speaker and also can evoke certain positive or negative feelings and reactions from the other party. Self-presentation is also a component of self-disclosure in that it emphasizes selective use of personal information to control outcomes in social relations.

Gilber et al. (1988) delves into the issue of active versus passive perceivers. First impressions are extremely important in any context. People only catch glimpses of another’s outward behavior and actions, mainly because other variables can interfere and distract. The article examined two experiments in which people’s perceptions were affected by interrupting variables, and how the resultant image of a person or event was mediated through that distortion. For public relations and social dynamics, this means
that levels of perception are highly dependent on making solid initial impressions, because the receiving parties may only take notice of the most important attributes.

Booth-Butterfield (1991) describes how impressions that people form about others are heavily determined by the level of verbal disclosures made during conversation. Self-disclosure allows listeners to know more about a speaker and to form impressions of him or her. Research in this area has not yet identified all the properties of communication that actually lead listeners to perceive disclosure and form their opinion from this information. Most interpersonal research has focused on the concepts of reciprocity and attraction. Despite this, the affective impact on the listener is one of viewing the speaker as comparable to themselves, and so the relationship develops on a foundation of understanding and predictability. People with too much variability are not as easily trusted or related to, and so friendship may take more time or simply not occur at all. Therefore, honest disclosure is often met with positive receptivity, even if the subject being addressed is a negative one. However, when the negativity is directed towards others or in a disharmonious context, then the speaker may be seen as threatening to the listener.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory can be used to explain the relationship of commitment and trust between an organization and individual. Developed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959), social exchange theory proposes that people assess relationships based on the consequences of the exchange, both positive and negative. The costs may be tangible or intangible elements that can simply be described as unpleasant, while rewards are anything with a positive benefit. In applying the theory to the relationship between a
person and organization, the level of involvement costs time, emotional energy, money, and an overall level of giving one’s focus (Bussell & Forbes, 2006). The rewards for the allegiance with a company come in the form of social favorability, the use of products or services, or simply feeling satisfied. While many methods are employed to measure approval or disapproval of this relationship, there is the issue of how they reach that point of measurability. Ultimately, the alliances chosen are done so with the implicit assumption of both parties working towards their own goals, with pursuit of fulfillment being intertwined. This may be subtle, with the drive being emotional, or it could be larger, taking into account financial issues (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994).

Social exchange theory looks at how relationships are determined, based on the consequences assigned to them. When a persona explores the possibility of a new relationship, regardless of the size, he or she is quickly assessing the level of investment and potential benefits derived from it. The person uses their own comparison level (CL), which determines the level of attractiveness inherent in an alliance and their satisfaction with it. If the anticipated outcome is near the CL, the person tends to be satisfied with the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

The CL is what a person uses to determine whether or not they should continue to remain in an existing relationship or to seek an alternative. The height of the CL depends on the quality of the alternatives for that person, and so if the relationship drops below their CL, he or she is expected to end the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). What is interesting is how the human mind has difficulty letting go of certain relationships over others. When there is a great deal of investment applied to a person or thing, it is harder to break away, even if the relationship has soured. This is especially evident with people,
where intimate relationships persist despite the objective disapproval of their compatibility. That sense of needing to be loved and to belong is what ties people to each other and even to brands. If the investment is strong enough, they will be more likely to forgive rather than disengage.

When relationships meet and exceed expectations, becoming predictable and expected, trust develops (Venable et al., 2005). The familiarity with the person or relationship generates reliability and consistency that opens up the sharing process (Kingshott, 2005). The more the expectations are met, the more attractive the relationship becomes. With greater satisfaction comes a diminished interest in alternatives. When the level of expectation surpasses that of all available substitutes, then there is a committed and loyal relationship. Achieving this, both personally and professionally, is what organizations strive to do with their audiences (Dwyer et al., 2006). Once they have reached the trust phase they are allowed to make mistakes without the threat of completely diminished satisfaction.

Trust and commitment are essential for building strong relationships. They are a central focus for all organizations, particularly non-profits. A group that demonstrates more high-quality services on a reliable basis translates to a perceived sense of the organization and employees as being responsible (Parsons, 2007; Weir and Hibbert, 2000). In the case of non-profits, that thread is what prompts donors to give their time and money. They believe in the cause, and they believe in the organization and the people running it. There is no reason for concern, provided that they continue to be satisfied with the results (Venable et al., 2005).

Public Relations’ Identity
As Sparks (1993) notes, the historical credibility of public relations has been so low that many professionals are distancing themselves from the title. They are still conducting public relations activities, but they have deferred the traditional namesake to adopt more readily accepted ones, like advertising, marketing, and customer relationship management. The lack of a clear public relations definition, along with established standards and practices, has subsequently left academic and professional practitioners in an uncertain standing. The lack of unification has created a negative public perception of the field, ironic given that the profession thrives on public interest.

Critical sensemaking can help public relations professionals to construct a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their role, especially in the face of external negativity (Helms Mills, 2003). Erez & Earley’s (1993) research into the subject pertains to establishing a stable and positive self-view, partly contingent on the views of others. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) suggest that the need for social validation has generated a reluctance to self-identify with their work. With public relations, the negative labels and stigmas have generated a negative view, in society and in the media.

Weick (1995) identifies one of the key concepts of sensemaking – identity construction – as being based on extracting cues from others to construct reality. At the same time though, these cues must be plausibly related, with some instances being more meaningful than others. Critical sensemaking takes Weick’s framework and integrates the concept with an organizational framework. This self-identity sets a limit on the imagined and actual context of power. The social construct is a force that sets parameters on one’s mindset, affecting their internal competency and sense of belief. The sensemaking process is further influenced by external rules, policies, or guidelines.
established by an organization’s culture (Blackler, 1992).

Public relations lacks a clearly defined identity, and as such, practitioners have trouble making sense of their role amidst the social system (Lages & Simkin, 2003). Commonly accepted definitions portray public relations as being an essential management function for establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. This definition does focus on the role of public relations within an organization, as well as its relation to the external environment, but it falls short of providing a true sense of identity and stability. Although research has revealed public relations as being an accepted and necessary part of organizations, the true sense of professionalism has yet to be achieved. Issues like accreditation, requirement of formal education, and establishment of a code of ethics have not been fully implemented. Even for public relations groups that strive for standards, there are no enforceable actions for compromising those rules (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000).

In addition to the identity debate, practitioners are also dealing with the negative perceptions of the industry. The media climate perpetuates the field as being distorters of the truth, and does little to move it to a professional level. Since an occupation is a critical part of an individual’s self-image formation, then it is necessary to amplify the most positive elements to at least reaffirm the sense of self (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Sensemaking helps work through the complexity by highlighting certain cues from the external environment, linked to ideas and actions to comprise a mental whole (Helms Mills, 2003). But with public relations, the cues are misrepresentations of a true sense of reality, and they outnumber the positive instances. Therefore, practitioners have to focus inwardly, with regard to the individual and organization, to provide an overall sense of
well-being and worth. Even though the number of people entering the field has risen dramatically over the last two decades, the image continues to diminish (Sparks, 1993).

According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), a person who is part of a stigmatized group, because of the need for social validation, finds reluctance in strongly identifying with the work. When it is not readily seen by others as an essential part of an organization, the media and other outlets have no problem in perpetuating this image. Studies have indicated that negative representations in newspapers and newscasts far outnumber the number of positive stances. The most enduring image is that the field focuses almost entirely on publicity or press agency, with activities frequently being labeled as ‘publicity stunts.’ The entertainment media is also responsible for this perception. The television series, “Sex and the City” featured a character whose version of public relations was to hold parties and attend events. The much-acclaimed film, “Thank You for Smoking,” furthered the image of being spinsters and manipulators.

Miller (1999) took the concept further by examining novels and films from the last seventy years, analyzing the representations of the field. What was found across the decades was a focus on immoral actions, including lying, cover-ups, and hiding the truth. The proliferation of these images and ideas has undoubtedly influenced the general public. They have no reason to question these portrayals because the profession has had such an uphill battle in establishing itself. The instability of the field, both academically and professionally, has made it an easy scapegoat.

**Words and Meaning – The Power of PR**

The power of public relations derives from the shared meaning that continually constructs and reshapes reality. The interaction and communication between words,
individuals, organizations, and society define the meaning and context of human affairs, and as such, they outline the availability of resources and the extent of power. This social system is based on linguistics and symbols, creating shared meaning that defines society and thus the individual’s role in it. With regard to social construction, culture captures and expresses the resources of power, creating or altering them through thought, belief, and action. The power of any system is derived from the relationship of the people to ideas, and public relations is the bridge among those areas. The basis of identity and identification lies in the ability to interpret reality and the quality of relationships (Courtright & Smudde, 2007).

Those in the communication function, from public relations, mass media, or an individual, engage in the movement of social meaning and its expectations. Public relations orients reality to coincide with expectation and emotion. The rules, rights, roles, institutions, and social identities presume structure and order in a social reality that needs those constants to survive. Power in this circumstance derived from the patterns and expectations that emerge and the ability to forecast those changes. Societal relationships, ideas, and identity are all symbols, mental images and shortcuts that allow greater ease of living, with less mental effort (Heath, 2006).

Discourse or dialogue shapes structure and provides the means for ordering the political structure. Without human context, the tangible elements of life have no real meaning or significance, but with human presence they have weight and power. Organizations and individuals use discourse to define the environment in which they act and perform. They enact their view of reality in their motives and interests, communicating and then acting (Hansen-Horn 2008).
Such concepts might dismiss the power of public relations as just another part of a rather elaborate mental construct. But it is in identifying and understanding the system that true reflection occurs. The social system is based on linguistic resources, the currency of movement and change in this reality, and this is where public relations practitioners have a sense of management and power. At its core, public relations engages in the movement of resources in ways that help society function (Heath, 2006). It helps set standards on how dialogue affects matters of the mind, identity, and relationships. This is what focuses the need for actual relationships to develop, because the interconnections are paramount to staying on the mental map. Public relations co-creates meaning to guide the products, services, crises, conflicts, and people that constitute society.

Trust

Trust is an essential aspect of society’s complex and interdependent system; one necessary for easing communication between two parties (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Organizations are constantly striving to build a connection with their stakeholders, and trust is a primary component of this effort. It is the link that holds together the commitment, investment, and integrity necessary for a relationship to develop and flourish. Furthermore, Rawlins combined several definitions of trust to define it as one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another, based on believing the other party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Rawlins, 2008). Researchers like Hon and Grunig (1999) further define trust into three dimensions: integrity, dependability, and competence.
Trust is essential for organizations to establish cooperation and communication in their productive relationships. If distrust exists, then suspicion arises, but when those in power self-disclose and show benevolence, they are likely to be trusted by those dependent on them (Gabarro, 1978).

Interpersonal relationships carry with them the risk of exposing vulnerability, and both parties have to feel that, in giving of themselves, they are safe and secure (Fischman, 2003). The willingness to show vulnerability is based on positive expectations of behavior. Trust is a key method of reducing uncertainty. A component of communication is mitigating the sense of risk or anxiety that can arise from interdependence. Large and small organizations have focused their efforts on reducing concerns of affected groups. The traditional mode of operation has been to increase the frequency and repetition of messages, but research has shown that these do not effectively overcome the gap between stakeholders and authority figures. Part of this is because the public does not merely see the facts, they operate more on the feelings and impressions made by the other party. If people feel positively towards something, they lower their expectation of risk, and the same applies to negative feelings and the increase of risk. A reliance on feelings overrides analytical reasoning (Slovic et al, 2004).

The difficulty is that the mass media thrives on the threat and uncertainty of actions, creating a less rational or logical approach to relationship perception. The mass media amplifies the perception of risk or vulnerability, but even so, people displace these concerns by relying on the third person effect. What research has revealed is that more people rely on interpersonal channels to assess their personal risks. But in order for
messages distributed through interpersonal channels to have credibility, the source must be trustworthy (Heath et al. 1998).

Social trust leads citizens to rely on institutions and organizations rather than just individuals. The risk management of these relationships is based on perceived shared values, which are conveyed via the stories or narratives from these institutions. Trettin and Musham (2000) focused on social trust as being an unbiased sense that the actions and behavior can be taken without fear of consequences. This is closely aligned with interpersonal trust, as well as personality and cognitive traits involved between individuals. As such, trust can be seen as the expectancy of an individual or group to rely on the promises of another.

If trust is established, then problems that arise are dealt with more efficiently (Calman, 2002). Case studies indicate that the public scrutinizes the behavior, performance, and processes of an organization more than the factual content (Sly, 2000). The trustworthiness of an institution is as important as, if not more than, the quality of the messages. Organizations understand that the public demands more than being asked to blindly trust them. If organizations provided information more readily, in a way that people could understand quickly and easily, then it is likely that the trust in organizations would improve (Sly, 2000).

Trust and openness are closely linked. To gain trust, communicators have to be honest and open, while conveying information directly, with minimal fluff. Whenever possible, industry spokespeople should provide information to avoid suspicion of hiding something. That is the barrier that exists when an organization grows beyond the identification of just one person; there is an aura of uncertainty about who the company is
beyond their words, slogans, and supposed actions. Heath, Seshadri and Lee found that the more knowledge a person had on a subject, the more the levels of uncertainty would improve perceptions of openness and trust. However, Burton stresses that simply increasing the quantity of information is not useful. It is in quality of the messages, with all components working succinctly that there is a true sense of involvement and active thinking (Heath & Abel. 1996).
DISCUSSION

Public Relations - the Ideal

Public relations is a continuous process, ideally situated around the assessment of internal and external communication for the benefit of the organization. It is an integral part of a business’ strategic plan; working to fulfill management’s objectives in a socially responsible way. The American economy is a free market system, and essential to this system is an understanding that the consumer can access information on a variety of possibilities. With many avenues for a person to choose from, regardless of product or service category, there is now more freedom in the decision-making process than ever before. This competitive model means that businesses have to work harder to improve their products and services, and to also gain attention and establish relationships in ways that conventional advertising cannot achieve.

The key with public relations is to be known and held in high regard, to have an actual relationship. With companies, the aim is not just to make a profit, but to also effectively and efficiently satisfy a need or want that the public has. This involves a philosophy of continuous improvement and benevolence that should advance the human condition. Part of this is the underlying assumption that what is being made, sold, or provided is somehow satisfying a public interest. It is therefore the job of the public relations professional to make sure that the message of improvement is available for the public,
being realized within the organization, and open to revision if it does not coincide with people’s expectations. This can only be achieved if there is some level of dialogue occurring with the process.

The sheer amount of media available – television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet – have opened up an unparalleled level of information for people to see and have access to on an immediate basis. It is the wealth of information that makes it hard for a connection or relationship to be forged between the relevant publics; there is often too much output and not enough interest to generate input. This is because the sheer volume overloads people, and so only the elements that stand out to them are what is worthy of notice. The media will all-too-often report on what is going wrong, and so it is up to public relations to highlight what is being done right. But more importantly, the public can sense when something is amiss, and so trust is even more difficult to establish.

In the past, prior to advances in communication and transportation, almost all transactions occurred within well-defined geographic areas. People simply did not venture out very far beyond their own neighborhoods and shopping locations, and as such, they got to know the local grocer, baker, and various shopkeepers personally. They identified the store and its products with the emotional connection or reaction they had to the clerk or owner. If the owner of the bakery was a nice, decent, trustworthy person, then this association was often transferred to the products that were sold. It is simple: people like to do business with people they know and like. It was the personal nature of the relationship that allowed a business to flourish, to distinguish itself as a brand entity.

Today, small businesses still constitute a significant part of the market, but transportation and communication methods have greatly expanded the concept of
community relations and altered the landscape of competition. The personal approach or element of trust has evolved to the concept of brand identity, and public relations practitioners should embody the ideals inherent in their organizations. The one-on-one element of human interaction is what allows corporations and larger groups to connect with their audiences, very similar to the way that business owners and communities have done for generations.

At the moment there is a great degree of separation between the entity that is an organization and the individual. Although there are spokespeople, they do not garner enough attention to mitigate the concerns with the organization as a whole. With CEOs and other people in authority positions being rotated in and out, there is no stable source of identification, except with the entity as a whole. Since corporations are large and have many subsets, one area that displays fault may bring scrutiny and judgment to the entire company.

The image of a company has evolved beyond an association with its founder or CEO. It is viewed as a brand identity, rather than just one person. With this in mind, the company has to coordinate all its message centers, even the personnel themselves, to convey an image of a company beyond just one person. They create a mental construct that people literally and figuratively buy into, and this is what allows some level of trust and sustainability to occur.

**Overcoming the Stigma**

The difficulty with establishing trust is that public relations practitioners have often been viewed as liars, manipulators, and distorters of the truth. This image developed in the early days of PR, when overly obvious practices put profits ahead of public interests.
The negative industry practices, combined with a general stigma in entertainment and news outlets, cast a tarnished reputation in the eyes of the public. The need for a solid paradigm, a definitive role for PR, emerged out of the perception of practitioners as acting in secretive and manipulative ways, often forgoing ethics and moral responsibility. As such, it was perceived to act in ways that were distrustful and one-sided, severing valuable emotional connections rather than building them.

When the purpose of PR was first brought into question, the understanding was that PR should use persuasion to mold public opinion. The focus was on manipulation rather than communication, but this approach did little to build long-term relationships with the public. Many of the messages written and spoken were carefully phrased to such a degree that they either meant virtually nothing, or they conveyed the opposite of what people thought they meant. The public was being degraded rather than educated. This occurred because simply saying or doing something altruistic does not work unless all components are congruent.

Bernay’s ‘engineering of consent’ was often used to express the PR tactics going on at the time. This term focused on bending the will of others and leading them to a prearranged conclusion. This engineering is made all the more insincere and ill-received when it proclaims good deeds and actions. It seems somewhat self-aggrandizing when PR is used to proclaim noble acts solely as a way of gaining public attention. Mainstream practitioners argued that rising profits and power far outweigh any desire to self-analyze the PR process. Seemingly, the goal of PR was to make money for the client, management, and themselves. Meanwhile, the counter argument was that this focus acted against the interests of the public good. What it really did was bury public
relations in a pile of tactics and gimmicks, clouding any benevolent intent, and so the emphasis on real strategy, a mindset of progress, was diminished. But, some practitioners, like Ivy Lee, were focused on the truth and using this to spearhead ideas and concepts. However, somewhere along the line the negative perception won out over the positive, at least in the eyes of the media and general public.

And it is in this vain that the public relations profession has sought to establish itself, separating its identity from that of marketing and advertising. Even though public relations has specific functions and is more economically viable now more than ever, it is still not regarded or perceived in the same way as the other professions. The key to establishing a new paradigm is to align the interests of public relations with those of the company, the clients, and the public in an all-encompassing view of congruency. There has to be a belief in the message and intent, not just a spoken allegiance or dismissive gesture to it. The ability of people to seek out disparaging information means that the belief and trust of the public relations professional in what they do is paramount to believing that the public will accept it.

The situation is analogous to going to see a doctor. The physician who is knowledgeable and confident will establish trust with their patient, and this in turn will lead to an emotional satisfaction with the level of service. The doctor who has doubts, concerns, and generally defers the risk to others is not seen as entirely component or trustworthy, simply because his lack of faith in his abilities translates over to the patient. So in this regard public relations practitioners should adopt the passion and fervor for their companies and products and translate that into their interactions, one-on-one or otherwise, that they carry over with others. Profits are not made solely on the merits of a
product or service but on the relationship that is perceived to exist. But it is hard to generate the trust-mindset for customers, especially when there is not a stable source of faith with the practitioners themselves.

**Establishing Trust**

People want to know that, within large and small organizations or companies, the interests of citizens are being considered. The free market system is not one sided; with businesses dictating what people can and cannot do. Rather, it is a sharing of information about what a company has done, will do, what they produce, the people who make the products, and how the products or services provide some good for society as a whole. If something goes wrong, there are no secrets anymore, everyone will know. For the consumer, the decision-making process is made easier when either a conscious or subconscious linkage can be established between the company’s contribution and receptivity to feedback. Part of this is a component of actual interaction in community activities, whether it be financial contributions or sponsored programs. It also extends to awareness and influence in the media; encouraging a positive message that keeps people informed and in a mindset of understanding.

On the organizational side of things, public relations people are responsible for developing and broadcasting a message that is succinct with the company’s current practices or performance. This extends to the strategic level; working to ensure that everyone involved is focusing on what is good for the company and society. Various scandals have resulted in a lack of trust and a decline in overall confidence with organizations and what they represent, and so public relations works to open a dialogue that can combat this, even in the face of obstacles.
At its core, public relations acts as a balancing point between a company and all interested parties. The goal is to proactively avoid problems by working hard to build relationships, listen to citizens, and to respond promptly to all internal and external issues. The reactive component is what public relations activities seek to avoid, but it is still part of the two way communication process. The goal is to promote a strong sense of reality for people to share, one that has a strong emotional linkage between all involved parties. If there is a product recall or problem resulting from some internal or external issue, then the company has to let the public know that it is being dealt with immediately. These situations could lead to lawsuits, firings, internal investigations, boycotts, and/or increased negative media exposure. But the public is willing to forgive, provided that they feel a sense of trust and responsibility being taken on by the offender. If a real relationship exists, then they are more likely to forgive and forget.

**Interpersonal Branding – The Self-Brand**

An effective brand is like putting money into a savings account and earning interest. The more time, effort, and money contributed to the account, the more the investment grows over time. The increase of resources devoted to the investment strengthens the brand itself, and if done correctly, it will have a greater influence on people’s decision making power. Most of the buying and selling of anything simply has to do with whom you feel comfortable doing business. From the standpoint of public relations, the brand is the symbol of trust, the weight of an entire company placed on customers associating a positive image to the entire organization.

So for a good brand the key is to establish trust with the consumer. Even components like image and typeface have a way of connecting everything together in an intuitive
fashion. The Nike swoosh and ‘Just Do It’ slogan are virtually meaningless to a true objective observer. They mean nothing by themselves, like looking at an ancient symbol with no context, but when associated with everything else that Nike has invested in – celebrities, clothing, shoes, sponsorships, bricks and mortar, etc… - the concept takes on an all-encompassing reality.

Companies rely on taglines, logos, packaging, stores, and other factors to attract attention, gain trust, and act as mental shortcuts for remembrance. But the simple purpose behind the expenditure and effort to improve a brand is to forge that difficult connection they so desperately need. If customers have good feelings about a company – good or bad - that is a huge step in itself. The sheer amount of information that bombards the senses on a daily basis makes it miraculous that people are able to remember any name or logo, let alone anything beyond the product itself.

The real power behind all of this is the interplay between all the elements that allow something abstract or arbitrary to have real power. The old slogan, “Sticks and stones may hurt my bones but words will never hurt me” is a definite fallacy. Pointing to a stranger and identifying him as a doctor generates a mixture of impressions and feelings about who he is, how he lives, and his overall well-being. But it is not enough to align the words with an image of entity; they have to be congruent with the overall presentation, not just grammatically or aesthetically styled indicators. As such, the message has to be congruent with the messenger, and the whole sense of self has to align with the feelings themselves.
**Dialogic Communication**

The purpose of dialogic communication is to reach towards an actual open dialogue between all involved parties. But the reality is that the relationship between user and media is often one-sided at first, with one active and one passive. Sometimes an equal level of communication occurs initially, but even levels of exchange usually do not occur until some sense of rapport has been established.

Dialogic loop involves the inevitable delay that arises when a message is sent out. One person sends the message and then there is a lag and processing before any sort of response is given. When dealing with a company and individual, the time lag is perfectly normal because the level of exchange from the organization is much greater initially, allowing a sense of familiarity or comfort to be felt with the receiver. What most people are looking for is a level of investment or emotional attachment with others, not just an abstract idea of the company. This connection can come in the form of blogs, discussion forums, hotlines, customer support, wikis, chat rooms, or any number of features. They are essentially bridging the gap between a positive general perception from mainstream advertising, and moving towards a more equalized sense of exchange. After all, a person rarely sees one commercial for a product and immediately buys it; they usually need repeated encounters and additional information before reacting. With a value-based relationship there is a means of expression, without it there is simply a transaction.

It is once again akin to meeting new people. There has to be the right balance between what is said and felt and what is done in return. If extremes are reached too early, then this will offset the entire relationship. It only can blossom into a friendship when both parties have something to gain in the interaction, even if it is just based on
feelings and emotions rather than an external concept. So in attracting attention to a web site, print document or other source of media, the information conveyed has to strike a chord with the audience, and they have to respond to it in a way that is non-invasive but mutually satisfying.

For example, the flow and design of a website or marketing material are incredibly important in determining the level of involvement from an individual. All visual aspects have to be aligned with the message, the audience, goal, formatting, colorization, and general accessibility and consistency. At its core though, it works on the same fundamentals of an interpersonal relationship. One party has to feel that the other has revealed him or her in some ways, divulging a lot of their personality and interests in a concise and progressive way. For there to be a real connection the interaction has to be sufficient to supply information for the person while offering an opportunity to lend voice to the other party.

**Design – Becoming the Self**

Every single aspect of public relations involves design in some aspect or another, even if no visuals are used. Composition is important because image, branding, identity, and other concepts are at the core of public relations. Take Coca Cola for example. The basic ingredient is really just flavored syrup, but with the right flow of text, the right visuals, the key messages, and the availability of the product, the brand is so much more than just a fizzy liquid drink. It becomes a feeling, an emotion that is hard for most people to express other than just saying that they like it. It has transcended generations to become a staple of society, even though it is fundamentally a carbonated beverage. It is a concept though, a lifestyle that is portrayed and lived every time someone drinks a bottle.
If the packaging was just simple text with a white background then there would be no real appeal, no strength to coincide with the other areas that design a mentality. But because it is consistent and trustworthy, with the taste matching up to the perceived expectations, then there is a continued strength and belief in the company.

Graphics work with public relations to create a shared reality for people to embrace. Advertising, newsletters, brochures, websites, news pieces, etc… all entail the manufacturing of messages in some form; they design a reality that a consumer can see and enter. Just as the way a person dresses, walks, and talks corresponds to the way others perceive him or her, the same could be said of a company and its brands.

**Strategies**

The key with public relations is that it is supposed to be a two-way process of communication, but the flow is often one-way asymmetrical. For the company doing business, they may believe that their website, brochure, or press release is speaking volumes to the core audience, but without feedback then there is nothing to substantiate these claims. It can be a tad ego bursting to realize that the time and energy put into creating a design is attractive but off the mark. Yet, this level of humility is essential to actually getting things done and creating a solid environment.

Take crisis management for instance. There is always the potential for something to go wrong, and it often does. Solid aesthetics and crafting of messages can mean the difference between people being afraid and people believing that everything will be fine. What the crisis plan or sense of planning does is give a greater core belief in the identity tied to the organization and the people in it. This extra bit of guidance is something that strengthens the attachment to the company as a whole. It is the belief in a plan, a
message or idea that can be believed in and available when needed that allows things to function normally.

A similar situation occurs with general tactics/strategies that aim for increasing market share or retaining a core audience. If there is an avenue for feedback to be generated and incorporated into the work, then it is more likely that people will accept the design as being comfortable. Most people have never been to Apple’s headquarters, but they have established an image of liking the company simply because their store fronts are pretty, the products are neat, and the level of marketing saturation is quite high. They have created a personal connection with an abstract entity that happens to be a multi-billion dollar operation. The company does care about meeting consumer demand but it also cares about making money. Yet, the public perception to this issue is sidestepped in favor of making trendy and fashionable products.

With any marketing strategy, especially large-scale, the focus is on bridging the person-to-person connection with the receiving end. If they feel invested in the outcome, then they think about it, the idea matters to them. To not think about it is to eliminate any sort of emotional spikes that might occur. It is the same with print and media, to elicit an emotional reaction is to wield real power and authority.

The key with all communication strategies is that there has to be consistency across messages and mediums. The focus is always on the target audience, the message, and the overall purpose to all elements. The proper alignment between words and images can mean the difference between something standing out versus stopping dead. The design essentially creates personality and character for a company.
Public Relations Research Paradigm

At a purely research level, public relations has to align itself with solid theories and bodies of knowledge. Without them, then there would be no true understanding of it as a profession, nor would the results and achievements be easily recognized. As a result, practitioners cannot form a solid basis for their career or even their dedication to it. Public relations is a complex process of evaluating the environmental factors for an organization, and seeing how the internal and external communication processes are helping the business. It is in this capacity that public relations is integrated into all levels of business, being interdependent on their success, with no clear beginning or end.

The most fundamental area is in setting objectives and goals for the company to meet, giving a vision for everyone to hold onto, which manifests itself both inside and out. If accomplishments in the past are clearly defined, then there can be a clear measure of performance for the business as a whole. This takes into account quantitative and qualitative instruments to identify what everyone is doing and how well it is working. This all-encompassing view is really a management function, one of seeing how the components are all working together.

Working on intuition may have worked before, but in order to succeed there have to be clear models or paradigms for why certain strategies and tactics are implemented. This is where the academic and professional environment meet. There has to be a solid foundation for people entering the field, otherwise they will never be taken seriously, nor will they be able to create any realizable goals. Most of the models are taken from marketing, advertising, communication, and the various social sciences. They all play a
part in understanding how the mind works and what can be done to yield influence.

These models will help, not hinder the communication process.

**Self Congruence**

There is not a logical way to convince someone that he or she should be liked. It is not a choice, more a complex web of feelings and emotions, tied to what a person does and says. As such, there is no point-specific formula for friendship and relationship building, but there are elements that distinguish themselves from others. There are thousands of verbal and nonverbal cues that the mind processes without conscious awareness.

In the early tribal days, the social status of any male or female was constantly updated on a moment-by-moment basis. If someone underperformed in some capacity, then the whole tribe would know; there was no real extensive communication system with the rest of the world, so news traveled fast within the small community. Up until the advent of better forms of transportation and communication, people still lived in relatively close communities, and so the evolutionary programming has worked alongside social conditioning to reinforce this mindset. Modern men and women should see little social consequence to a difficult interaction, but there is a lingering fear of humiliation that might occur on both sides. But this is part of the paradigm on which uncertainty in an interaction exists, and only in knowing the perceived social repercussions and limitations can someone move past them.

Even before verbal communication fully developed, men and women still formed tight-knight social groups. They did so by using their nonverbal indicators to convey a presence, a sense of self to others, much like an actor can affect the mood and atmosphere
of a room simply by altering their demeanor. Tonality and movement account for the largest portion of communication, yet so much focus is placed on the words chosen rather than the belief and congruency behind them. So in modern society, even if a person says all the right things, if the other elements do not add up, then there is a lack of trust. This may occur on some subconscious level, resulting in an impression or feeling rather than logical dissemination of reasoning.

The socially savvy individual is one who is not internally reacting to others, and is therefore not outcome dependent. Walking into a scenario with a particular agenda can predetermine failure before it starts. This puts one party in a future-focus, without paying attention to the present interaction. Even if the verbal identification points to a different goal, subtle cues, by way of tonality and nonverbal indicators, highlight the real purpose of the exchange. The emphasis on subtle nonverbal indicators has much greater weight in human interaction than has been studied. The difficulty is that the micro-cues are hard to analyze and interpret, but they are worthy of attention because they have an ancestral human context that is still relevant. What this means is that the verbal component can be altered through training and interpersonal development, but they are a small step in the process to a fully congruent ability to communicate.

The difficulty in altering an interpersonal model for an individual, as well as with organizations is that both have accepted their own mental paradigms. The breakdown of their abilities and overall processes, basically identifying shortcomings, is a hard concept to grasp. In some cases the negative behavior has persisted and not been weeded out through receptive feedback. The relative comfort zone of one’s abilities has fostered a
belief in that system and direct or indirect refusal to change, even if it is leading to fewer or weaker relationships.

Many people simply do not have enough positive feedback to allow them to progress to a new mindset of interaction. Simply learning new routines is not enough, they have to affect their emotional state. For social interactions the currency is perceived power, and the creation of intangible and shared realities between the people involved. The reciprocal nature of the exchange is not quite as important as the creation of a positive emotional reaction.

**Social Power and Belief**

The key concept missing from a lot of research and theory in interpersonal relationships is the idea that one party has to establish greater control over framing the reality early on. The sharing cannot occur until one party takes hold of at least 70 to 80 percent of the interaction and shapes a positive outcome. Their way of divulging information is done so that the other has enough to hold onto in building a mental image of the person, synching up the spoken words to the initial impression. Only when that point of revelation has occurred will the other person feel comfortable with revealing him or herself. And then the two parties can share information in a back-and-forth manner that is on a more equal basis.

There are inhibiting factors in approaching new people, including anxiety and sense of interfering with their activities, and a perceived lower-value than the other person. Even a hint of fear or anxiety in an interaction can manifest itself in micro-cues that are conveyed to the other people. Separating the actor from the outcome is what makes the change so important. Once one party thinks that the other has gained interest and intent,
they stop being in control and revert to a feedback mentality. The high value individual who has already established their sense of self does not need the validation of others. The one who already feels safe and secure in themselves is the greater victor because they create their own reality.

Credibility

The issue of establishing trust is difficult to define because it is not easily faked. No matter how well someone pretends to be something or someone they are not, their persona ultimately unravels. The reason is that interactions are based more on feelings, not facts. The simple exchange of information, focusing more on the verbal methodology, is the most readily apparent to social scientists. But the most obvious course of study is not always the most evident. Thus, trust becomes the elusive obvious.

The sense of honesty and genuine liking is based on the way a person feels. More importantly, in the study of public relations, what people say and the order with which they say it are not as important as the way they say it. Under the right conditions, even the most mundane things can seem interesting, provided that the speaker believes them to be worthwhile, bringing about the same reaction in others.

All too often the drive is towards appearance, but real honesty is something that is hard for others to refuse. To convey transparency in a way that presents the self as open, willing, and without agenda or judgment gives the other party a sense of control.

The key with public relations is a true belief in the organization and their role within the industry. With people changing jobs in greater frequency, there is a sense that loyalties are displaced, and this makes it extremely difficult for public relations to ground itself in the context of people’s mind, particularly its own practitioners. The role is one in
a constant state of flux, slowly moving towards stability on the academic and professional side, but still hard to process for those inside and outside the field. For instance, if someone said that they were an accountant, a mental representation has already occurred and connections are made. But with public relations, it is harder to define. What this does for the practitioners and social scientists is instill a fuzzy sense of self-identification, with the profession and the organization. The roles and responsibilities provide merit and purpose for the individual, but knowing the description does not necessarily contribute to a greater sense of meaning.

An ideal practice is to self-identify with the organization and develop an internal sense of commitment to the clients. What brings credibility and trust to interpersonal relationships is the feelings that are evoked. Revealing feelings to another bridges a stronger gap than facts, because facts on their own do not correspond to sentiment or relation to a person. It is similar to the way statistics can lessen the impact of an issue rather than strengthen it. Numbers become too abstract, separating the individual from the impact of the information.

As an example, actors are only effective if they reveal the truth of the emotion, not just pretending. The bad actors and actresses are the ones who do not capture the emotional intensity of a scene and therefore lose the grasp of the audience. A truly great actor can capture real emotions in the moment, really experiencing it in a way that strikes a chord with people. It is this sense that gives power to their performance and why they are exalted in the media. They work well because everything about them is congruent with what they are conveying.
The key is to listen, not just to the words being said but what is not being said. The mind is taking in everything it can about a person or encounter, and all these processes are acting to develop shortcuts, which entails feelings. Often the sounds over the words, the way things are said can have more power than just words. That is because true belief derives passion and intensity from a story, not just going through the motions. Real emotional storytelling gives resonance to everything about the power, so that even the pauses have a sense of importance beyond the proper coordination of noun and adjective.

It is this level of emotional intelligence that has to be incorporated into public relations, because without it there is nothing because lip service to organizations that even the people working inside are just paying lip service to. All interaction is social, it is an inescapable part of the human experience. There is so much interaction that people align themselves with other people, not just the concept of a thing, but what the connection with others brings or implies. For organizations, it is a matter of bringing people into the reality of the company’s ideas, to project a strong enough presence that they remember and find importance.

The problem with existing paradigms on interpersonal and overall social development is that there is too much emphasis on the concept of reciprocity. The microcosm of the way a company has to work is much the same as a face to face meeting. One person has to initially provide more transparency and information than the other party. Rather than things being 50-50, they are more like 80-20. The speaking party has to bring the other into his or her world, making it seem interesting and stimulating, otherwise the other will lose interest. Putting too much weight on the other person makes it less likely that they will invest, because their exchange flips into an autopilot form of conveying facts,
without any emotional attachment. But if the 80 party tells how they feel while projecting high demonstrations of value, not just objective importance, then the other person starts to feel what they feel. The 20 percent capacity is almost like a measure of getting someone involved more on a perceptual level, bringing them into agreement and responding as speed paths to additional information. Part of this resonance is in crossing emotional threads, to use storytelling to have multiple avenues of thought that provide seeds of information, hints of the inner personality, that can be referred to later. The key to understand is that every word, utterance, gesture, and micro-component is a reflection of who the person is and the meaning ascribed to them by society.
The goal of public relations is to maximize the returns for all stakeholders. In order to be successful, practitioners have to research, plan, and embody the concepts they represent. The reason is that everything has a consequence. Without solid research then decisions would be without merit. But research is not just the accumulation of facts and quantification of data, it is tapping into the essence of human communication, the feeling and emotions evoked. The more information available helps in making more accurate decisions, but there is also the need to examine things subjectively rather than objectively, staying in touch with the audience’s expectations. Without this attunement, then the environment changes without notice, and the ability to line up reality becomes hindered. The purpose of it all is to provide a link to an essential understanding of humanity.

What people notice are the subtleties of a social exchange, and these small gestures or cues, coming from within a solid mental state, are what determine trust and credibility. The process of interpersonal development on an individual level and from an organization-customer level is fairly similar in concept. Both work to bridge a connection and establish emotional linkages. At their core they have to have a well-grounded sense of self and role identification. Otherwise their messages, words, actions, and general behavior are perceived as incongruent.
For businesses, the tendency is to rely on facts, not understanding that the new and often subjective forms of relationship building are key to their success. In regards to further research though, one of the most interesting aspects is the anxiety that exists and between the sender and receiver. When one person talks to another, there is the sense of anxiety about making the initial approach, as well as the potential for the other party to respond negatively and not reciprocate the connection. From a business standpoint, the uncertainty rests with the receiver trying to interpret and take the information and turn it into active interest.

The key problem is that practitioners have to evolve their mindset to move past formal methods of communication that presume established relationships, and instead, they must develop true internal competence. This internal sense of social intelligence can been trained via verbal conditioning patterns and routines, but rather than just focus on the verbal components, a more involved process has to look at an individual’s entire belief system and sense of value in relation to others. If practitioners feel capable of creating solid relationships on their own, with diminished anxiety, then this will translate to an improved ability to forge and then maintain the connections between a business and its customers. After all, an organization exists because of the people involved, and it is this essential emotional conduit that allows true relationships to flourish.

Appendix A proposes three methodologies for pushing an individual past the stranger/friend barrier. A lot of apprehension exists in communicating with people, especially in informal settings. But it is in moving beyond approach anxiety that a true paradigm shift can occur. The old models for training and calibration can be used, but they have to look more at the inner thoughts and feelings of the individual. The purpose
is to align the speaker’s messages and behavior to an overall sense of congruency; one that believes in their own abilities and the public relations ideal.

The limiting factors include the lack of a clearly identified role for public relations practitioners, as well as a lack of proper interpersonal skills training. Both concepts start from within, manifesting themselves throughout all aspects of their personal lives and the infrastructure company. The old paradigm of public relations assumes that relationships exist and need to be expanded or maintained, but what is missing is the idea that even the base level interpersonal model is flawed, relying too much on the assumption of mutual exchange.

What this means for individuals is that they have to focus on their internal self and pass through the anxiety barrier of communicating with strangers. After all, a public relations practitioners should fundamentally be able to approach anyone and forge a connection, not necessarily relying on formal measures to do so. A competence in this regard requires a large quantity and quality in conveyance of self to another, at least initially, before the other party feels comfortable jumping in. The same could be said of organizations, in that they have to share a great amount of self before the public takes notice or is familiar enough to attempt a connection.
REFERENCES


Methodology Scenario #1

The potential application of this paper’s concepts could involve actual field experiments to learn social skill development. Over time, the mix of tactics and strategies would generate a more evolved and attuned mindset. Hypothetically speaking, it would occur through a system of calibration and intuitive readjustment. This would be a long-term program that takes note of a conscious processing of evolutionary influences and routines, involving their verbal and nonverbal behavior. The larger concepts work into a strategic function of personal development that requires a thorough understanding of self and identity. The main effort with this study is to work on the anxiety involved in the initial meeting between two people. If a practitioner is not adept at performing this process of rapport building in their daily life, then they will be somewhat removed from the process of true public relations identification. Having core competence, a sense of belief in one’s ability to connect with other people manifests itself in the demeanor of a person and their daily life. So in developing the internal self, their core belief system can manifest and adopt a comparable level of involvement in their public relations practice.

Bypassing the approach anxiety in meeting others is one of the most difficult aspects to achieve, but once learned, the fear diminishes dramatically. The real need is for practicing engagement with a mass number of people as frequently as possible, with the
objective being to engage an individual and/or group for as long as attainable. This is all
driven on the basis of being comfortable, not only with other people but the self. With
this in mind, a system of social skill development requires a forum beyond the classroom
environment, one that provides more opportunities for social interactions, both short and
long-term.

Some social gatherings, especially bars, represent dense areas for interacting with a
lot of people in a short period of time. A person working to bypass approach anxiety has
numerous groups of people on a ready-made basis, with lower social consequences for
faltering. The sheer act of approaching and then conversing with one group after another
resets a lot of mental restrictions and encourages rather than inhibits more social
behavior.

What is sought to be answered whether or not the old sense of self, one that is prone to
increased levels of fear or awkwardness in social situations, can be bypassed in favor of
ease and comfort in new environments. This is the first step though, not taking into
account successful routine-building; it is more a process of getting past the invisible
barrier between one person and a group of strangers. In time, the use of strategies and
tactics will improve the quality of interaction and investment, not just the quantity.
Negative behavior and mannerisms will be more readily weeded out, given the increased
frequency and conscious remodeling of one’s behavior. Documenting the process of
change will help identify future areas to work on, and then to use existing research on
interpersonal dynamics to adjust to the new scenarios.

The objective is not to cross-compare behavior in various social situations, but to
instead look at the actual dynamics of the groups themselves. Every environment has its
own culture and atmosphere, but yet the group configurations are almost always the same. The key in the initial outings is to acclimate to the bar and club scene, and with the environments being more predictable and familiar, there is less apprehension about in-field activities.

This period of time is run simultaneously with a full self-redevelopment program that focuses on internal strategies. Rather than enter into the environment without any preparation, there is a significant amount of reading and role playing required, particularly related to the dynamics of men and women from an evolutionary perspective. The reason for gathering all this information is to be able to consciously assess what is going on around the venue without being swept into the environment. If the level of awareness becomes too unconscious, then the ability to examine from a scientific standpoint is put into question.

The combination of strategies and observations will develop a paradigm for how to best approach people in these settings. Proper preparation will provide a better emotional buffer against the difficulties involved with cold approaches, while also allowing further self-examination later. The tactical approach will rely mainly on research gathered from various experts in the social dynamics field, as well as practical self-improvement concepts. This information will then be put into practice, starting first with basic approaches, and then working up the level of interaction until true social calibration can occur.

The principle behind this research is comparable to learning any new skill set or ability. It is analogous to driving a car; when one is young and inexperienced, everything in the vehicle is super-acute and the mind is hyper-conscious of all actions and activities.
Over time though, with more practice and refinement, the process becomes one of unconscious competence, and so driving occurs without deep thinking.

Each interaction is like playing a new game but with a memory of the previous one. If the escalation progresses and then halts, then the reset occurs in approaching a new person or set. The goal is to move past any attachment to the outcome or people’s judgmental opinions and instead just genuinely enjoying other people’s company. The visualization and personal affirmation processes have been helpful in easing a person’s apprehension and anxiety levels, and these would probably be the first part of any redevelopment program. To do this, one of the more popular self-help or improvement programs on video or audio tape would be selected and viewed in great detail.

Calibration refers to a synching of behavior and rhythm patterns that develops through repeated exposure and scenarios. It is essentially a crash-course in human behavioral understanding; moving from one conversational group to the next, while developing a conditioned set of responses that makes the scenarios less threatening and more predictable. If a person can learn to not be fearful of approaching and conversing, then they can eventually be eased into disclosing more information about themselves and establish an actual relationship.

The key focus is on rapport building, and to approach as many people as possible to develop fast awareness of what works and what does not. Opening people is the first step, followed by a more one-sided conveyance of information that must be interesting and engaging enough to keep the other people’s attention. With solid core competence or solid self-esteem, an individual cannot immediately go up to a group and introduce
himself to them. This action is met with some level of fear and anxiety by both parties, because the person assumes rapport without earning it.

Being too direct sends up red flags that the new party has too much intention in the interaction. The best conception behind approaching someone else is to be unassuming and simply interested in meeting new people. On a most primal level, people can sense when another has ulterior motives and desires, so the best mantra to follow is one of being without desire. The only interest is in getting to know another person and to perhaps build a friendship, and so the purpose of the research is to work through the mental anxiety of approach and engagement.

Further study into the field of interpersonal communication would focus more on the nonverbal side; which is actually more important in some respects. The primary objective with the previously mentioned scenario is to develop an overarching sense of right and wrong in engaging people, with more emphasis on the verbal dynamic. But most impressions of people are made within seconds, taking into account their body language, dress, and other physical characteristics. These variables can be controlled by an individual who embarks on a full self-analysis and improvement program. The verbal aspect can also be all-encompassing and work from a long-term strategic position. If someone improves who they are and makes him/her self more attractive and interesting as a whole, then this will trickle down to their tactical use of language.

Greater studies into the subject would embark on long-term physical and mental makeover that would take several weeks to months. The shorter program would involve two to three nights of continuous approaches, particularly in bar situations, but performed almost every week. If someone engages another person or a group, even if it is just for
three minutes, they could still approach dozens of people in only two or three hours. By
the second night, their confidence and aptitude for moving through group environments
will have improved.

Overall, what this study would seek to do is understand the process by which two
people meet, and to develop practical scenarios and implementation plans for
conditioning to this type of behavior. For public relations, it means that the relationship-
building aspect can actually occur, and the job of practitioners extends to all people, not
just clients. Professionals should essentially be living embodiments of their company’s
positive attributes, and in so doing, they should look at every person as a potential
stakeholder. Public relations has focused a lot of time and attention on press releases,
campaigns, integrated communications, press conferences, and philanthropic events; but
the simplest form of relationship building is often overlooked. People in the field need to
know how to establish their presence and build value in a relationship, not just assume
that a relationship already exists and just needs maintenance. At its core, public relations
is about the sharing of information between all involved parties; so rather than talking to
someone, they have to learn how to talk with them.

**Methodology Scenario #2**

The training of social calibration processes could be achieved using many different
methods. The visualization and personal affirmation processes have been helpful in
easing a person’s apprehension and anxiety levels, and these would probably be the first
part of any redevelopment program. To do this, one of the more popular self-help or
improvement programs on video or audio tape would be selected and given to
participants. These subjects would be gathered from a college level, preferably in the age
group of 20 to 24. They would have already completed the basic speech course, and so their understanding of communication would be fundamental at the very least. The institutional review board would have to be sent all information pertaining to the study, and their approval would have to be granted before the study could commence. The idea would be to give them a survey on personal assessment levels pertaining to confidence, ability to communicate effectively, personality, and then see if the visualization techniques have any influence on their conceptions of self.

After this initial phase, subjects would be put into role-playing scenarios, whereby a key actor would present various scenarios for the subject to react to. Observation on the part of the researchers would determine the level of aptitude in dealing with each situation, and surveys given after testing would help correlate results and determine if any improvement was made. This is more of a short-term testing procedure that would be a test of how recent exposure to positive affirmations could influence behavioral demonstrations.

This study could also be expanded to real world scenarios and observational analysis. If the study wished to include a system of visualization and combine it with actual modeling and then demonstration, it could include normal social situations that would encourage interaction. The largest hurdle to combat is the initial approach anxiety that exists for most people, particularly introverts. The visualizations and personal affirmations for pre-testing would help ease some of these issues, but more than likely it would entail a long-term cognitive restructuring program. Meanwhile, something like field experience, particularly in high-frequency situations like bars, theaters, buses, concerts, and similar areas would help in calibration.
The key focus is on rapport building, and the best way to learn would be by identifying an extremely well-attuned model to follow. This person could be someone with a great amount of field experience, but a proper determination could only be made by having very well-defined recruitment and selection procedures. This would entail the use of in-depth interviews, personality assessments, as well as some role playing and observations. This person would have to be within the same peer age group as the participants, and he/she needs to be comfortable in a teaching-oriented environment. If the recruitment of a guide is not effective or efficient, then a professional communicator or faculty member could act as the instructor. What this person will do is lead the more introverted members of the group through various scenarios on how to engage people in conversation.

The participants would have to sign consent forms and be willing and eager to step out of their comfort zones in order to further academic research and personal advancement. They would go with the model/mentor and attempt to emulate his abilities through demonstration and observation. The key concept is to have the social personality types – introvert/extrovert approach as many people as possible and develop a fast awareness of what works and what does not.

Research Questions

1. Will a crash course in social dynamics have a positive effect on participants?
2. Can extreme introverts be socially calibrated in an extremely short period of time?
3. Is the inclusion of an extroverted model, even one capable of demonstrating application, enough to cause even temporary breaks in introverted behavior?
Methodology Scenario #3

The study begins at the most basic level, with identification of behavioral models. The basic level of modeling occurs through the viewing of television programs and movies. The idea is to watch only those films with the most alpha-male oriented characteristics. The limitation of TV and movies is that there is a lack of realism, but the images of success and charm are already apparent in popular culture. James Bond movies, anything with Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Robert Redford, Harrison Ford, Tom Cruise, and numerous other top-billing actors are available for viewing. Even if the real people are somehow not reflective of their on-screen personas, the movie characters do display qualities that are perceived as likeable, admirable, and socially attractive. The initial part of the study begins with an informal analysis of the characteristics that comprise the ideal figure, in this instance it would center on the male figures throughout cinema. The objective is not to do a comparative analysis, but rather to develop a basic concept of how these people carry themselves in situations and what makes them so popular and likeable. The common denominator is that these actors are able to project themselves extremely well, they radiate energy and positive feelings, and they make the other people feel as if they are the most important people in the room.

This informal part of the study is the baseline for the researchers and the study participants. This realm of research is highly comparable to the visualization and video exercises that were conducted in the other proposed studies, but they are not meant to be teaching models, more like guidelines of understanding. Information derived from movies, with tightly compacted dialogue and storylines, cannot readily be transferred to the real world, but it can act as basic introductions to the topic.
The idea is to recruit one primary undergraduate student with extraordinarily well-attuned intuitive properties and qualities of extroversion. Using a professor or other professional with high people-oriented skills may also be acceptable, but it works better from the standpoint of peer reinforcement and modeling to have someone within the age group of 21 to 24. The way to recruit such a person is either from a personal inventory of friends, or to actually recruit externally using a Myers-Briggs survey, an in-depth survey, and field observations/recordings. As part of this process, the core candidate will receive some monetary compensation. The money will be spent on participative members, preferably 3 to 5, with extra being allotted for study materials.

Recruiting and narrowing the field of attractive candidates will be highly subjective, composed of a board of two males, two females, and one faculty advisor. All of whom will have been involved. All board members will assess candidate’s speaking abilities, attractiveness, genuineness, and overall potential and the display of traits on a 1 to 7 Likert scale. The response tables will be filled out during an assessment of different scenarios and their reactions to them.

The purpose behind these is to understand just how quickly and effectively the potential recruit could answer the questions and respond in a way that promotes a positive image and builds friendship, despite any opposition. After the initial pre-screening process, three candidates will be given Myers-Briggs personality exams to assess their level of extroversion and verify some of the information presented during the informal interview.

Once a candidate is selected, the intention is to take that person’s abilities as a model of behavior and have it transferred to others. The short-term goal is a tactical approach, not
necessarily a strategic one. With this in mind, the person is supposed to act as an additional aid or live-action model for the participants who require field experience.

Participants will be recruited in much the same way as the coach. Respondents must be between 21 and 24 years of age, and will be compensated for their time. The respondents will be given the same questions and judged on the same interval scale, but virtually polar opposite traits will be looked for with regard to social abilities. The key is to take those who are fairly socially retarded or inept, with their Myers-Briggs test scores being the most extreme for introversion. The scores will be revealed to the respondents, and they will be fully aware of the procedure involved well in advance of their participation. They will also have the option to drop out of the study at any time, and that they will be paid in accordance with the agreement of their participation.

The subjects will be given the opportunity to meet and engage in conversation and interaction with the extreme extrovert. This session will be conducted over the span of an hour at a restaurant that is desirable for food selection and conversation. Further avenues worth exploring are to record their interactions on some level, and evaluate their progress with in-depth content analyses.