ABSTRACT

Title: “Applying Grunig’s Models of Public Relations: A Q-Sort Analysis of Public Relations Professionals in the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA)”

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This study examined the roles and functions of public relations professionals in the Women’s National Basketball Association. Grunig’s four public relations models were used to categorize the opinions of the respondents regarding their organization.

Eight respondents took part in the study. All respondents were given thirty-six statements that each described distinctive public relations activities and ideas. The statements were pulled from research originally conducted by Grunig and expanded upon by researchers Sulaiman Al-Enezi, Tamu Graham-Reinhardt and Jamie Mettler. Each respondent was instructed to sort the statements based on their opinions of the organization for which they were employed.

The results of this study were analyzed using the Q-method. Two factors were discovered through this process. Factor 1 (The Publicists) perceived their main role as advocates or publicists for the organization (falling into Grunig’s press agentry/publicity model). Factor 2 (The Collaborators) perceived their role as more of a vehicle through which the behaviors and attitudes of their publics could be changed (falling closer to Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model). Both factors, however, showed signs of employing multiple models within their day to day activities. Neither factor fit completely into one model’s profile.