

**THE U.S. COAST GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER:
ROLES, PERCEPTIONS, AND CULTURE – A COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE
STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

MATTHEW J. MOORLAG: The U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Officer: Roles, Perceptions, and Culture – A Communication Excellence Study

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U.S. Coast Guard missions have grown considerably since it transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Using “best practices” from the excellence theory of public relations and high reliability organizational theory, this study examines whether the current structure of the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program is sufficient to effectively provide a full spectrum of public affairs services over the range of activities that the service has been engaged in since transferring to DHS. Differences between two types of public affairs officers (PAO), primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs are examined to provide insight into whether the U.S. Coast Guard has the right people in the right place to conduct excellent public affairs at the right time. Based on the survey research results with these two key groups, the researcher recommends creating the External Affairs Limited Duty Officer specialty and provides additional options to increase public affairs effectiveness.

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ABBREVIATIONS

α	Alpha: Level of significance
μ	Mu: Population mean
χ^2	Chi-square statistic
9/11	September 11, 2001
CBP	Customs and Border Protection Agency
CC	Command Cadre
CGPAC	Coast Guard Public Affairs Course
COAST GUARD	United States Coast Guard
DC	Dominant Coalition
df	Degrees of freedom
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DINFOS	Defense Information School
DOT	Department of Transportation
DUINS	Duty under Instruction
F	F statistic
FW	Familywise error rate
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GAO	Governmental Affairs Officer
GIE	Global Information Environment
HRO	High Reliability Organization
INS	Incident of National Significance
JFO	Joint Field Office
JIC	Joint Information Center

JO	Junior Officer
LDO	Limited Duty Officer
n	Number of cases in a sample
NRP	National Response Plan
<i>p</i>	General symbol for probability
<i>p</i> level	Probability of a Type I error
PA	Public Affairs Specialist
PADET	Public Affairs Detachment
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PAOQC	Public Affairs Officer Qualification Course
PQS	Personnel Qualification Standard
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<i>t</i> statistic	Student's <i>t</i> statistic
USCG	United States Coast Guard
YN	Yeoman
<i>z</i> score	Normal deviate (standard score)

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the Coast Guard was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in February 2003, its missions have grown substantially. Along with legacy duties such as maritime safety, law enforcement, enforcement of regulations and treaties, and national security, it is now the lead federal agency for maritime homeland security along America's vast maritime border; duties that include port security, maritime protection for vital facilities such as nuclear and chemical plants, and anti-terrorism force protection (U.S. Coast Guard, 2002). As the service adjusts to these expanding roles, it may be well-served to similarly adjust its public affairs posture to more effectively communicate with diverse stakeholders across all levels of the organization. These stakeholders include the media, strategic partners, government officials, activist groups, and citizens.

Coast Guard public affairs is an individual command responsibility (U.S. Coast Guard, 2003). Public affairs specialists (PA) and public affairs officers (PAO) are assigned to a variety of diverse commands in geographically distinct areas according to a predetermined billet structure. A select few of these billets are designated for PAOs with significant experience or advanced degrees in public relations or a related discipline. The vast majority of PAO assignments, however, are filled by officers who conduct public affairs activities as a collateral duty. This means that these officers have primary duties outside of

the public affairs specialty; they become involved with public affairs on a limited basis as the need arises. Using officers to “fill in” on a collateral duty basis is not a new concept for the Coast Guard. It is common for junior officers to accept responsibility for three-to-five collateral duties in addition to their primary duty. It is also considered a valuable way for junior officers to acquire a broad base of general knowledge about Coast Guard missions and responsibilities, knowledge that will become indispensable as officers achieve seniority in rank and responsibility. Additionally, the service is recognized for and takes great pride in its ability to do more with less – a cultural trait and operational necessity. In order to successfully conduct myriad missions in an area encompassing 3.4 million square miles of ocean space that washes some 95,000 miles of coastline (Jones, 2004) – with fewer personnel than the New York City police department- Coast Guard leaders must possess ingenuity, a penchant for responsibility and accountability, and superior training and experience. Leaders must also develop a clearly defined hierarchy of priorities. Public affairs is, arguably, lower on the fiscal priority list than many other mission support areas such as maintenance and logistics, procurement, and administration - all of which have specially trained officers billeted at all levels of the organization.

The Coast Guard’s current public affairs model places PAs and PAOs with the most experience and training at the regional (District or Area) and national (Headquarters) level (U.S. Coast Guard, 2003). This model is flexible in that it allows experienced and highly trained public affairs personnel to ramp-up at any level - local, regional, national, or international - depending upon the nature, complexity, and severity of the situation. This model was used effectively in the response to Hurricane Katrina in late August 2005. The organization’s efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina are well-known. The Coast Guard

was widely hailed as a model for emergency preparedness in stark contrast to other federal organizations that performed poorly (U.S. Coast Guard, 2005). Not only did the operational component of the Coast Guard operate effectively, the public affairs component was widely praised for its proactive and effective crisis communication response to the media crush that ensued. In the aftermath, President George W. Bush handpicked Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen to rebuild a severely criticized overall federal disaster response effort (U.S. Coast Guard, 2005). At the height of the response, nearly 40 percent of the Coast Guard's public affairs personnel were temporarily relocated to the gulf coast to provide support to the regional public affairs component. The flexibility of this model and the dedication, experience, and training of Coast Guard public affairs personnel paid significant dividends to the Coast Guard and the American public during Katrina. As the Katrina response proved, this model is effective in providing timely, adaptive, and professional public affairs support during crisis communication events and other events that the Coast Guard is experienced in and well-prepared to respond to.

But, is this model sufficient to effectively provide a full spectrum of public affairs services over the broad range of activities that the Coast Guard has been engaged in since its transfer to DHS? This is an important question because the organization has also made significant structural changes since 2003. The absorption of legacy Group and Marine Safety responsibilities into the Sector construct, along with the addition of homeland security responsibilities means that collateral duty PAOs may have significantly broader communication responsibilities than they did when the most-current PAO assignment structure was developed. Additionally, because the concept of homeland security is still in its infancy, public response to homeland security measures cannot yet be reliably predicted.

Homeland security measures instituted incrementally in the wake of 9/11 may increasingly run up against local, regional, or national activist groups unhappy with administration policies and desensitized publics eager to return to the “normality” of pre-9/11 life in America. In one recent high-profile homeland security initiative, the Coast Guard found itself in the cross-hairs of activist groups and government officials opposed to new strategies implemented to train, equip, and prepare Coast Guard personnel to thwart a maritime-based terrorist attack (Davey, 2006). Much of the criticism that the organization absorbed during the conflict stemmed from a perceived failure to adequately communicate with the public and government officials about the new initiative and the impact that the program would have on business activity, recreational maritime users, and the environment.

The global information environment (GIE) is both demanding and unforgiving. Events that historically remained at the local level can, and sometimes do, quickly spread to the national or international level. The addition of homeland security responsibilities in a GIE may also require different communication strategies than the legacy missions that the current public affairs structure is based on. Now, more than four years after the Coast Guard was transferred to DHS, a central question for today’s Coast Guard public affairs leadership is whether the current public affairs model is still the best public affairs model.

Relationships with stakeholders can provide both a mechanism to gauge public opinion and an early warning system to detect potential conflicts, as well as opportunities to devise amicable solutions with stakeholders (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In situations where public response cannot be reliably predicted, proactive dialogue with stakeholders may result in greater gains for the Coast Guard than a “decide, announce, and defend” response (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 317). In situations where “win-win” solutions are unlikely to be

attained, strong relationships with stakeholders obtained through open communication and strategic management may provide the trust and understanding necessary to successfully implement programs even if stakeholders fundamentally disagree with them. Building strong relationships with stakeholders is not just a “value added” public affairs product that communicators can provide to increase the effectiveness of the organization, it is fundamental in organizations that practice excellent public relations (Grunig & Repper, 1992).

At the local level, collateral duty PAOs may fill the role of professional communicator, but it may also be predominately filled by a member or members of the dominant coalition, thereby limiting the collateral duty public affairs officer to a “technical services provider” role. The term “dominant coalition” will be used throughout this thesis and bears some explanation. Dominant coalitions can vary from organization to organization. Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig (1995, p. 15) defined the dominant coalition as:

“The group of individuals within an organization with the power to affect the structure of the organization, define its mission, and set its course through strategic choices the coalition makes. Top levels of the organizational chart typically identify some dominant coalition members, but dominant coalitions are often informal alliances. Such coalitions can include others who are low on the organizational chart or missing from it altogether. Individuals who control a scarce and valued resource can be included in dominant coalitions, as can those who are central to the network of decision makers in organizations. Communicators may be members of dominant coalitions, even though the organizational chart indicates otherwise. Among organizations with excellent communications programs, CEO’s often identified the top communicator as a member of the dominant coalition, although this was not always the case.”

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms dominant coalition and command cadre will be used interchangeably to describe senior ashore command leadership at the Air Station, Sector, District, Area, and Headquarters organizational level. Although command cadre are also

present at the small boat station, and cutter levels, as well as various other commands, public affairs activities at these commands are limited and frequently handled by the Sector, District, or Area public affairs component.

Chapter two outlines practices that organizations with “excellent” public relations use to increase their effectiveness as they communicate with diverse stakeholders. Since the researcher believes that the Coast Guard provides superior technical services across its three public affairs program levels - media relations, community relations, and internal communications, this study will focus on the PAO’s role as a professional communicator to provide insight into whether PAOs are integrated into the dominant coalition across major/medium ashore levels of the organization, whether PAOs are using research and strategic planning in their role as professional communicator, and whether command cadre perceptions of the PAO role are similar across those levels of the organization.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on the excellence theory of public relations as both a normative and positive theory for Coast Guard public affairs practice at the program and functional level (Grunig, 2001). Included in the excellence theory as it was originally conceived were three factors: (1) knowledge, as defined by the practitioner's public relations roles and the models of public relations practiced within an organization; (2) shared communication expectations between senior management and the public relations practitioner including the strategic use of public relations research and boundary spanning; (3) the extent to which an organization had a participative culture (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). A review of high-reliability organizational theory will be provided to introduce theoretical concepts that may help explain the nature of Coast Guard organizational culture. Figure 1 is adapted from Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995, p. 10). This graphic provides a representation of the three spheres that together make up the excellence theory of public relations.



Figure 1. **Three Spheres of Communication Excellence**
(Adapted from Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig (1995, p. 10))

Knowledge Core

Practitioner Roles

Practitioner roles were a key concept in understanding the function of public relations and organizational communication. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006) first argued more than 20 years ago that public relations was an emerging profession – it was still in the process of acquiring the attributes of a profession such as professional values, adherence to professional norms, and an established body of knowledge and theory to guide practice (Dozier, 1992). Because public relations is still evolving today, the function of public relations practitioners may still be subject to considerable role ambiguity (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). Organizational role expectations may be inconsistent with the practitioner’s professional role expectations. Although some role ambiguity may be positive for the practitioner if, for

instance, it leads to increased autonomy within an organization, a clearly understood and acceptable range of role expectations is nonetheless paramount to the evolution of public relations from a low-level and predominately technical support function in an organization, to the role of professional communicator. Equally important was the extent to which practitioners used their unique positions as researchers and boundary spanners - individuals who regularly interact with external stakeholders and gather information and relay it to members of the dominant coalition, to effectively engage members of the dominant coalition and various stakeholders (Dozier, 1992).

Expert Prescriber Role

Four theoretical public relations roles have emerged from studies conducted by Broom and Smith in the '70s and '80s, as well as Cutlip and Center (1971), and Newsom and Scott (1976). The expert prescriber role was identified as the informed practitioner. These individuals were regarded as experts on public relations; they were best informed about public relations issues and best qualified to answer public relations questions. Top management usually left the public relations program in the "hands of the expert" and assumed a relatively passive role. Expert prescribers were important during crisis situations and periodically throughout any program, but this role was generally considered to hinder the diffusion of public relations thinking throughout the organization because of the dependent relationship that resulted between the expert prescriber and top management (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992).

Problem-Solving Facilitator Role

In contrast to the expert prescriber, the problem-solving facilitator helped management systematically think through organizational communication to provide solutions to problems. Rather than “taking control” of problems, the problem-solving facilitator worked carefully with management to solve problems in a step-by-step manner (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992). This role is especially important to department heads in the Coast Guard. Department heads are similar to “line managers” in civilian organizations. Department heads, just as line managers, are the organizational managers most knowledgeable about specific policies and procedures within their purview, and they are usually part of the dominant coalition. When problem-solving facilitators and management work together to develop a comprehensive, strategic public relations planning process, managers understand program motivations and objectives, support strategic decisions, and work harder to achieve program goals. This role was essential in organizations that practiced “excellent” public relations.

Communication Facilitator Role

Broom and Smith (1979) conceptualized the communication facilitator role as a listener and information broker. This role kept communication lines open between an organization and its publics by removing barriers and facilitating the exchange of dialogue. Practitioners in this role were information sources and official contacts between organizations and their publics. They established discussion agendas, summarized and restated views, and helped participants correct communication problems through boundary spanning activities (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992).

Communications Technician Role

The communication technician played the role of technical services provider. Technicians wrote news releases, employee newsletters, developed Web site content and acted as media contacts. Practitioners limited to this role typically did not participate in management decision-making and strategic planning and were usually not present when management defined problems and developed solutions. They were brought in after the strategic communication process to implement the program (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). PAs generally assume this role in the Coast Guard, however, collateral duty PAOs may also play this role significantly more than their full-time counterparts.

Studies conducted by Broom in 1982 showed high correlations with these behavioral indicators of public relations role activities (Dozier, 1992). He also found, however, that three of these roles, expert prescriber, communications facilitator, and problem-solving facilitator were highly intercorrelated; in practice they were performed interchangeably by the same practitioner (Dozier, 1992). These three roles did not correlate with the communication technician role. As a result, in 1984 Dozier concluded that two major dominant roles occurred in practice: public relations technician and public relations manager (Cutlip, Center, & Broom 2006; Dozier, 1992). Public relations technicians were closely related to Broom's conceptualization of the communications technician. They focused on the traditional core of public relations work – writing press releases and conducting media relations. In contrast, public relations managers utilized attributes of problem-solving facilitation, expert prescription, and communication facilitation. They became part of organizational management and used research skills, an aptitude to think strategically, and thought processes that valued outcomes and the impact of public relations decisions.

Dozier's definition of public relations technician and public relations manager sufficiently describes the differences between PAs and primary duty PAOs within the Coast Guard. It is not clearly understood whether collateral duty PAO's are fulfilling a primarily managerial or technical public affairs role. It is important to note that both the managerial and technical roles are integral and necessary functions of the public relations process and the Coast Guard public affairs program. An important distinction between the two roles can be drawn from the conclusion of research conducted on 321 organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This research found that the major predictor of public relations excellence was the extent to which the senior communicator enacted the manager role versus the technician role (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006).

Models of Public Relations

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) expanded Thayer's (1968) concept of diachronic and synchronic public relations by developing a model of four types of typical ways in which public relations was practiced. The four models Grunig and Hunt developed were: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication. Press agency and public information represented one-way models of communication in which information was disseminated from organizations to publics, usually through the media (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The difference between the press agency and public information model was that practitioners of the press agency model sought attention for their organization in almost any way possible, whereas public information practitioners were basically "journalists-in-residence" who disseminated accurate, but usually only favorable, information about their organization.

The 1913 Gillett Amendment legally prevents the Coast Guard from using taxpayer money to persuade publics or government officials through solely publicity-generating activities or by hiring publicity experts (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). Although the Gillett Amendment is primarily concerned with raising revenue through publicity generating activities, the use of the term public affairs, rather than public relations, is used by all five military branches. In practice, public affairs programs and public relations programs are interchangeable; they involve essentially the same processes. For good reason, restrictions imposed by the Gillett Amendment make it highly unlikely that the Coast Guard engages in significant or structured press agency activities. The public information model, however, may accurately describe the lion's share of the organization's media relations activities that raise awareness of the service to the public.

Two-way communications models included two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication. The two-way asymmetrical communication model was more sophisticated than the one-way communication models because the communicator played an important role in gathering information about publics for management decision-making (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Using this model, communicators developed messages that were most likely to achieve the organization's desired results. The two-way symmetrical model was similar to the two-way asymmetrical model, however two-way symmetrical communication sought to manage conflict and promote understanding with stakeholders. Under this model, communicators negotiated solutions to conflicts between their organization and key publics. Research suggested that organizations practice each of the four models under certain conditions, and each contributed to organizational effectiveness when used appropriately (Leichty & Springston, 1993).

Building the concept of two-way communication further, Murphy (1991) developed the mixed-motives model based on game theory concepts. Rather than accommodating a public, organizations wanted to both forward their own interests and reach a solution acceptable to the other side – they had mixed motives. To accomplish this, an organization would likely use both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication tactics. She concluded that the two-way symmetrical model might be better characterized as the mixed-motive model because it incorporated both asymmetrical and symmetrical tactics. Grunig asserted that Murphy’s mixed-motives approach accurately described the two-way symmetrical model as he originally conceptualized it (Grunig, 2001). Grunig’s conceptualization was that two-way communication took place in situations where groups came together to protect and enhance their self-interests. Argumentation, debate, and persuasion occurred. But dialogue, listening, understanding, and relationship building also occurred and were more effective in resolving conflict than their one-way communication counterparts.

Cancel, Mitrook, and Cameron (1999) proposed a contingency theory of accommodation as a logical extension of the work Dozier, J. Grunig, L. Grunig, and Murphy completed on the two-way models of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication (Grunig, 2001). The contingency theory argued that an accommodative (symmetrical) stance might not always be ethical, especially when an organization operated in the public interest and when it had more knowledge about a particular situation than stakeholders. According to the scholars, sometimes not engaging in two-way symmetrical communications was the preferred stance because to do so would place communication processes above ethical principle (Grunig, 2001). This assertion may be especially true when an organization was engaged in a moral conflict with an external public. In practice, they believed that

organizations practiced public relations using a continuum ranging from pure advocacy to pure accommodation (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). As a result of additional quantitative and qualitative research on the models of communication, and sustained criticism of the two-way symmetrical approach as both a normative and ethically superior form of communication, Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) proposed a new model of two-way communication symmetry. This model was based on a continuum of communication with mixed-motive (symmetrical) communication at the center and asymmetric communication at either end of the continuum (Grunig, 2001).

In most organizations there are public relations technicians who know how to handle media inquiries, provide sources and collateral materials, deflect potentially damaging news about the organization, and get the organizations “story out there” (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Grunig and Grunig (1992) argued that these are essentially one-way communication strategies, with the communicator providing information from the organization to publics, but not receiving information that might help the organization in return. Both organizations that were considered to have “excellent” public relations programs and organizations that had inferior public relations programs had this type of expertise; however, improving one-way communication expertise alone did not lead to communication excellence. The knowledge that distinguished excellent from inferior communication programs involved two-way communication strategies. Most forms of two-way communication involved specialized knowledge about formal and informal research (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Questions that the Coast Guard may use to invoke thought about two-way communication strategies include: Does the public affairs officer know how to act as your command’s eyes and ears? Does the public affairs officer bring

information to meetings about various stakeholders in the community? Is the public affairs officer engaged with local community leaders and maritime organizations or does the public affairs officer merely respond to media inquiries and disseminate information?

J. Grunig developed an index that provided strong correlations suggesting that practitioners with the knowledge to practice the two-way models were most likely to practice them (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). They also had the requisite knowledge to practice the one-way models. Those practicing the one-way models, however, did not generally have the knowledge needed to successfully practice the two-way models (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). An important consequence of this for the Coast Guard is that if PAOs do not know how to use the two-way models or are unable to use the two-way models because they do not have shared expectations with command cadre regarding the communication function, they are ill-equipped to handle situations in which the two-way models would be appropriate and may instead opt to issue neutral statements consistent with the public information model. Dougall (2005) conducted longitudinal research on major banks in Australia over a 20 year period. Her research concluded that organizations that issued significant amounts of neutral statements in response to conflict statements from activist publics resulted in decreased public opinion for the organizations in their strategic attempt to downplay conflict and delegitimize the activist public.

Leichty and Springston (1993) argued that most organizations practiced a combination of the four models. It made sense that situations existed in which all four of the different models could be effectively used to the benefit of an organization. For the purposes of this study, the most-significant aspect of the previous research in models of public relations is that three of the four models are tools at the disposal of the public affairs

practitioner if that individual has the knowledge, shared expectations, and participative culture to use the models appropriately in any given situation.

Shared Expectations

In excellent public relations programs, communicators were linked to dominant coalitions by shared expectations and understanding about questions such as: What should public relations do for the organization? What role does public relations play in the overall management of the organization? In what ways can public relations benefit the organization (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995)? In excellent public relations programs, dominant coalition's valued communicators for their input before decisions were made. A participant in this strategic role, the public relations practitioner acted as a researcher, boundary spanner, and early warning system notifying the dominant coalition of potential trouble long before it emerged in the form of conflict. The use of scientific and informal research to support organizational decisions helped practitioners move into management roles. Because research provided a factual basis for reliable decision-making, practitioners who conducted research on a consistent basis were more likely to become valued participants in the strategic decision-making process – thereby developing critical linkages between the dominant coalition and the public relations component as shown in Figure 2 (adapted from Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995).

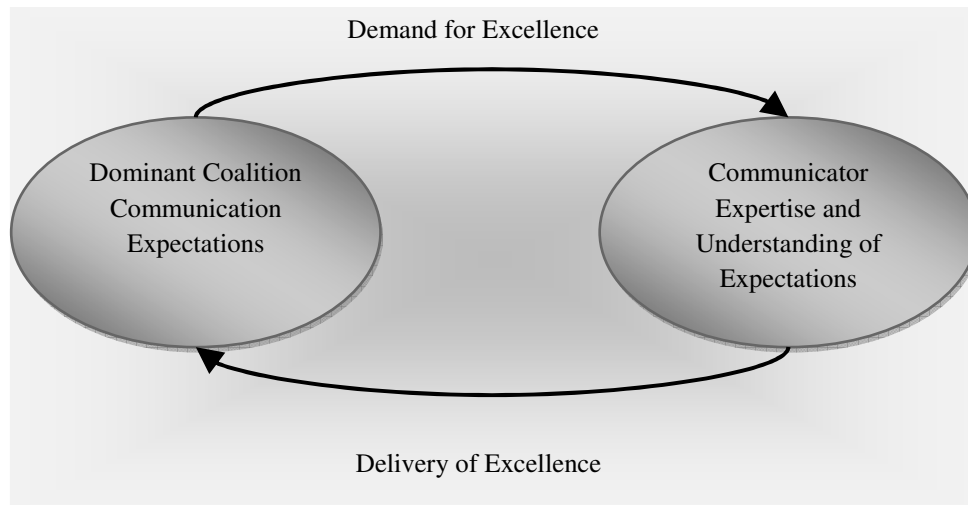


Figure 2 - **The Demand - Delivery Linkage**
 (Adapted from Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995, p.16)

When dominant coalitions and professional communicators are linked it creates opportunities for two-way communication. Because public affairs officers who use research to provide fact-based information about the external environment to members of the command cadre are more likely to be seated at the planning table, command cadre are likewise more likely to utilize that information about external publics when making those decisions. Closely related, when public affairs officers are involved in the decision-making process, they are better prepared to use their unique positions as boundary spanners to provide sound explanations for command cadre decisions to external publics, resulting in increased opportunities for win-win solutions to problems.

Boundary spanners are individuals who expanded their activities beyond the confines of the organization to find out and tell the dominant coalition what publics knew, how they felt about certain issues, and how publics could be predicted to behave relevant to the decision under consideration. Informational boundary spanning activities helped

practitioners find answers to questions about strategic publics and enhanced the power, influence and credibility of the public relations function with the dominant coalition. Practitioners in excellent public relations programs also conducted representational boundary spanning functions by acting as advocates for publics and articulating external points of view as the organization determined strategic solutions to potential problems (Springston & Leichty, 1994). Once decisions were made, practitioners in excellent public relations programs designed solutions and crafted messages to effectively communicate with target audiences in a manner that achieved the dominant coalition's desired outcome (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). For this outcome to happen, the practitioner must have been a member of the dominant coalition or otherwise involved in the strategic decision-making process.

Conversely, in organizations with inferior public relations programs, dominant coalitions saw the communication function as one-way – from the dominant coalition to publics. The practitioner was brought in after decisions had been made solely to help disseminate information in support of dominant coalition objectives. In this situation, the critical linkage between the dominant coalition and the public relations component did not develop (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995).

Participative Culture

Organizational culture may have a profound impact on the quality of communications by individuals within an organization, not irrespective of the practitioner's formal communications training or experience with public relations, but as a complementary force to nurture excellent communications (Grunig, 1992b). Several studies (Faviszak, 1985; McMillan, 1984, 1987; Nanni, 1980, E. Pollack, 1984) reported positive correlations between

two-way communication and the extent to which senior management supported public relations through a participative culture (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Organizations with predominately participative cultures created a system of shared values among employees using teamwork to accomplish goals. These organizations typically favored innovation and adaptation over tradition and authoritarianism and generally provided superior settings for excellent communications. The following review of high reliability organizational theory is provided to present support for the notion that the Coast Guard, through its adoption and consistent use of high reliability principles, provides a good organizational setting for achieving communications excellence at all levels of the organization. High reliability organizational concepts are primarily concerned with operational principles that allow the organization to conduct reliable operations in high-risk environments. Although the concepts originated in the organizational management sciences, they can be easily adapted to provide insight into organizational practices that enable excellent communication.

High Reliability Organizations

La Porte and Consolini (1991) studied three organizations that displayed characteristics that helped them transform from “high-risk” organizations to “high reliability organizations” (HROs). Their analysis addressed organizational qualities that allowed some organizations, such as nuclear facilities, hazardous chemical plants, and the military, within the multitude of high-risk industries to nearly always operate successfully under extremely risky and constantly evolving conditions. One significant feature of these organizations was their complex yet highly adaptive reactions to developing hazards. In routine situations these organizations operated under hierarchical patterns of rank-dependent authority, however, during high-tempo modes, the authority patterns shifted from rank-dependent to expertise-

dependent. Organizational communication changed from vertical channels to horizontal channels among groups performing related tasks. When events triggered an emergency mode, authority patterns were based on pre-programmed and well-trained responses. Individuals regrouped to confront the particular nature of the emergency under a predetermined plan (Reason, 1990).

Roberts, Stout, and Halpern (1994) studied hierarchical differentiation in the decision-making process in HRO's. Their research confirmed La Porte and Consolini's (1991) earlier research by showing that decision making ratcheted up or down the hierarchical chain depending upon whether the decision was routine or non-routine and the perceived importance of the decision. Generally, as problems became more unique or important, and as perceived accountability for a problem increased, the higher the decision would be ratcheted up the chain. This finding confirmed the importance of centralized decision-making processes in certain situations. However, an important caveat was that it was also noted that decision-making increased as experience and expertise increased, regardless of rank. This distinction led to a proposition that HROs exhibited a more-decentralized decision-making process during time-critical situations and when tasks were highly interdependent.

Roberts (1990) studied one HRO- a U.S. Navy nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. Aircraft carriers have highly complex interactions and processes that are tightly coupled (highly interdependent and time sensitive systems where the failure of one system affects other systems automatically), yet they continually operate safely in high-risk environments. To mitigate the potentially disastrous effects of complexity and tight coupling, aircraft carriers utilized operational management practices that stressed continuous training, hierarchical differentiation, high levels of accountability and responsibility, job design strategies to keep incompatible processes separate (e.g., fueling aircraft while loading

ordnance) and redundancy. The combination of all or many of these operational management practices helped command cadre create a “culture of reliability” (p. 173) or mindfulness within the organization.

La Porte (1996) best summarized the predominant characteristics of HROs identified in earlier research by stating that these organizations exhibit a strong sense of operational goals and mission, and focus on reliability in operations and investment in reliability enhancing technology, processes, and personnel resources. To guard against failure, HROs emphasize professional competence obtained through quality recruitment, continuous rehearsal, and interactive teaching systems. Redundancy is built into critical operating systems to ensure the organization’s ability to operate successfully, even if one or more critical systems fail. Operations are tightly coupled to allow distinct segments of the organization to operate in concert with one another. Management is characterized by a centralized structure during normal operations and a decentralized structure during crisis situations. During crisis situations, personnel at all levels of the organization have the authority and accountability to make decisions in the best interest of the organization. Once determined, these decisions are often made very quickly with little chance for review or alteration. Upon completion, operations are systematically reviewed and feedback provided at all levels of the organization. Process improvement is recognized and built into operating procedures to search out and mitigate potential sources of failure.

The Coast Guard’s adoption of high reliability principles makes the organization suited for incorporation of two-way communication strategies into all levels of the public affairs program. Officers who become members of command cadre engage in rigorous training programs and many develop both highly specialized skill sets and strong leadership

acumen during their careers. Acute attention to operational goals and mission is stressed from the time these officers are commissioned and continually reinforced as they achieve seniority in the organization. They also quickly learn how to incorporate information and ideas into programs, usually resulting in process improvement. These traits, each of which involves two-way communication strategies, contribute to the overall command cadre professional competence level, foster a participative organizational culture, and allow opportunities for communication excellence at all levels of the organization.

A review of the predominant public relations literature provides solid evidence that the Coast Guard's public affairs component can practice excellent public relations if the PAO is a manager who is part of the dominant coalition and has the requisite training and experience to practice both one-way and two-way symmetrical (mixed-motives) communication based on clearly defined organizational goals. The literature further suggests that a Coast Guard command culture rooted in high-reliability concepts creates a supportive environment for excellent communication programs to develop across the organization. The excellence theory provides a theoretical benchmark of principles that the Coast Guard can use to evaluate its public relations activities and provide empirical evidence for the value and utility of public affairs in support of the Coast Guard's communication and operational objectives. This research uses a structural rather than program approach to evaluating public affairs processes. Rather than focusing on the technical quality of our external, internal, and community relations programs, this research will look at the structure and communication processes of the public affairs component to answer the overall question: Does we have the right people in the right place to conduct excellent public affairs at the right time? So – let's find out how we're doing.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD

This intent of this thesis was to use quantitative measurements to provide insight into whether the current Coast Guard public affairs model is consistent throughout the organization's major/medium ashore units with contemporary public relations "best practices" as determined in the literature review. The following research questions were developed to accomplish this study:

Research Questions

- R1. Are there differences between public affairs services being provided by primary duty PAOs and their collateral duty PAO counterparts?
- R2. Are there differences between command cadre's perception of the primary duty PAO role and the collateral duty PAO role?
- R3. Which public affairs attributes and practices lead to shared expectations between PAOs and command cadre?

A study that endeavors to provide a statistically reliable synopsis of the positive state of Coast Guard public affairs from the perspective of primary duty PAOs, collateral duty PAOs, and command cadre at the staff and field levels may benefit public affairs leaders as they determine the future direction of the program. Analysis included a discussion of the

public affairs program strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improving the Coast Guard's public affairs posture based on the findings of the study

Method

Surveys were used as the primary method of obtaining data for use in this study. Two survey versions were developed and approved for distribution by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Behavioral Institutional Review Board (Behavioral - IRB). The subject population for the first (PAO) survey included all U.S. Coast Guard active duty personnel assigned to public affairs positions. A purposive sample of all U.S. Coast Guard members currently serving as either a primary duty or collateral duty PAO was drawn from the population and requested to participate in the PAO survey. These individuals are the individuals most likely to manage the public affairs program at their respective units. The sample size for this group included 71 individuals of various paygrades, from E-8 to O-5, with the majority at the O-2 to O-3 level.

The subject population for the second (Command Cadre) survey included all U.S. Coast Guard active duty personnel assigned to a command staff or command cadre position. A purposive sample of all U.S. Coast Guard command cadre or command staff personnel assigned to Chief of Staff or Executive Officer (or equivalent) positions at Air Station, Sector, District, and Area ashore commands was drawn from the population and requested to participate in the command cadre survey. Although these individuals are not likely to be the senior member of the unit command cadre, they are usually second in command and assume authority over all staff elements within the unit. These individuals are also most likely to be the unit PAOs' direct supervisor. The estimated sample size for this group included 68

officers of various rank, from Commander (O-5) to Captain (O-6), with the majority at the O-5 paygrade.

Prospective participant pools were developed with the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program manager. Additionally, the internet and U.S. Coast Guard intranet were used extensively to develop a list of individuals meeting the eligibility criteria for each respective survey. To inform prospective participants about the study, an introductory letter was e-mailed along with information about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. This letter provided a timeframe when the survey form was available and a link to the appropriate Survey Monkey Web based survey. Reminder e-mails were sent to these individuals five days after the survey was available, and 10 days after the survey was available. The survey period closed 15 days after the survey was introduced. This provided a short, but reasonable timeframe for most officers who were not on leave or extended absence to complete the survey at their convenience. Participants were offered the opportunity to send an e-mail stating that they had completed the survey and requesting to have their name removed from the e-mail reminder list. Five respondents sent e-mails and were removed from the list.

Both surveys asked participants to answer a series of 30 questions. Included in both surveys was an introductory set of six (Command Cadre) to eight (PAO) questions designed to gather general demographic information about the participants such as current position, type of unit represented, paygrade, and public affairs training and experience. The command cadre survey asked a series of additional closed-ended questions designed to provide insight into public affairs practitioner roles, models of communication practiced at the unit, HRO culture, public affairs perceptions, and practices that lead to representation in the command

cadre decision making process. At the end of the command cadre survey, three open-ended questions were asked to gain insight into whether public affairs responsibilities have changed since the U.S. Coast Guard switched from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, what the PAO structure should be at each type of unit, and any additional information that participants wished to include in the survey.

In addition to the introductory questions, the PAO survey asked a series of closed-ended questions designed to provide insight into public affairs practitioner roles, models of communication practiced at the unit, HRO culture, public affairs perceptions, and practices that lead to representation in the command cadre decision making process. At the end of the PAO survey, three open-ended questions were asked to gain insight into whether public affairs responsibilities have changed since the U.S. Coast Guard switched from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, what the PAO structure should be at each type of unit, and any additional information that participants wished to include in the survey.

Survey Research Considerations

Surveys offer several advantages over other types of research that may be of benefit to this study. For example, surveys can be used to investigate situations in realistic settings rather than in a laboratory or under artificial conditions, and they are not constrained by geographic boundaries (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006; Punch, 2003; Rea & Parker, 1992). This is important for this study because the public affairs officer and command cadre populations are spread throughout various locations in the United States and abroad. Attempts to gather individuals in one location would prove costly, time-consuming, and logistically unrealistic. Additionally, a large amount of data can be collected from a variety

of people with relative ease. This allows researchers to examine several different variables and to use a variety of statistical methods to analyze the data (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006; Sapsford, 2007; Nardi, 2003). Finally, the cost of surveys is reasonable relative to the amount of information gathered (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Since this research is not funded, keeping costs to a minimum is a significant factor for the researcher. Several disadvantages to survey research identified in the literature were taken into consideration when developing the study design. In survey research, independent variables cannot be manipulated as they are in laboratory experiments (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006; Punch, 2003). Because of this it will be impossible to determine causality between the variables. Although no definitive causal factors will be identified, inferences can be made between relationships in the data. These inferences will provide insight into the current state of the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program as it relates to characteristics identified in the Excellence Study and, if necessary, allow the researcher to make recommendations to improve the program. A second disadvantage to survey research is that inappropriately placed or worded questions can bias the results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003; Nardi, 2003). To overcome this problem to the greatest extent possible, the researcher took care to ensure that all survey questions were based on relevant theory and vetted through other individuals for ambiguous wording before the survey was distributed to prospective participants. Another disadvantage to survey research is that the survey may be answered by the wrong respondent (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Although there is no way to ensure that the intended participants actually answered the survey, the researcher e-mailed the introductory letter, survey invitation, and reminder e-mail only to a specific set of individuals identified as meeting the eligibility criteria for the study. The final disadvantage to using surveys

identified in the literature was that survey research is becoming more difficult to conduct (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006; Punch, 2003; Nardi, 2003; Sapsford, 2007). This is a significant problem with telephone surveys and, potentially e-mail surveys because of the influx of telemarketers competing with legitimate research studies. Additionally, respondents may be hesitant to open e-mail hyper-links in fear that their computers could become infected with a virus or other malicious software. To maximize survey response rate, the researcher followed the recommendation by Newman and McNeil (1998) that surveys should be constructed so they can be completed in 20 minutes or less for most studies. To minimize potential computer security concerns, the researcher only allowed participants to hyper-link to the survey through the Web-based Survey Monkey service. Additionally, all correspondence was sent from the researcher's official U.S. Coast Guard e-mail address and identified the researcher as a U.S. Coast Guard member conducting research on the public affairs program as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Because the individuals selected to participate in this study were believed to have a professional interest in the public affairs program, it was the hope of the researcher that the study would be deemed important by the participants, leading to increased response rates.

Data Analysis

Both surveys asked a series of one (PAO) to two (Command Cadre) questions designed to filter and group respondents. The initial question in the PAO survey was used to place respondents into one of two groups, primary duty PAO at a staff unit or collateral duty PAO at a field unit. If the respondent was not currently filling a PAO billet, the survey was designed to end after the first question. Similarly, in the command cadre survey, question 1

was used as a filtering question to ensure that all respondents were currently filling Chief of Staff or Executive Officer (or equivalent) command cadre or command staff assignments. If the response to question 1 was “no” the survey was designed to end. Question 2 was used to place respondents into either a primary duty PAO command cadre at a staff unit category or a collateral duty PAO command cadre at a field unit category.

Three sections of survey questions followed the initial filtering and grouping questions. A series of closed-ended background questions asked respondents to provide basic demographic information such as paygrade, length of time at present unit, education level, and various types of PAO training programs completed. This information was used to develop a baseline of descriptive PAO characteristics. The second set of closed-ended questions was used to answer R1, R2, and R3. The third set of survey questions were open-ended and asked respondents for additional information not covered in the previous sections. This information was content analyzed to determine relationships and trends in the data that supported recommendations made in the discussion section of the thesis.

All closed-ended survey questions were analyzed using SPSS (version 15.0 and 16.0) to provide basic descriptive statistical information including the mean, standard deviation, variance, standard error, and range for each question. Additionally, all data were analyzed for outliers, and used skewness and kurtosis calculations to ensure that data were reasonable for the statistical procedures used. Questions designed to answer R1, R2, and R3 were grouped into constructs and analyzed according to the following guidelines.

PAO survey questions designed to answer R1 were categorized into the following six variables and used as the basis for statistical tests:

1. **EXPERIENCE** – Aggregate scores from the PAO experience construct by group
2. **TECHNICIAN** – Aggregate PAO technician role construct scores by group
3. **MANAGER** – Aggregate PAO manager role scores from the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving facilitator constructs by group
4. **RESEARCH** – Aggregate representational boundary spanning construct scores by group
5. **FORMAL RESEARCH** – Aggregate formal research and informational boundary spanning construct scores by group
6. **DC**– Aggregate access to dominant coalition construct scores by group

Command cadre survey questions were designed to answer R2 and categorized into the following five variables and used as the basis for statistical tests:

1. **EXPERIENCE** – Aggregate command cadre perception of experience construct scores by group
2. **TECHNICIAN** – Aggregate command cadre perception of PAO technician role construct scores by group
3. **MANAGER** – Aggregate command cadre perception of PAO manager role construct scores by group
4. **RESEARCH** – Aggregate command cadre perception of PAO representational boundary spanning construct scores by group
5. **DC** – Aggregate access to dominant coalition construct scores by group

Additional questions were developed to gain insight into the models of communication practiced by PAOs and potential incorporation of HRO principles into the public affairs program.

In all analyses for R1 and R2, constructs developed by combining questions that used different scales were transformed into *z-scores* before conducting a reliability test, descriptive analysis, and statistical tests as recommended by Green and Salkind (2004). Additionally, in all analyses using summed data from two or more questions, respondents who chose not to provide an answer to a question received a value equal to the within-group mean score for each question. This was done to utilize as much of the data as possible.

All data were screened for reasonable descriptive statistics before conducting statistical tests. Skewness and kurtosis calculations for each construct were analyzed by group. For this study, skewness calculations within a range of plus or minus two, and kurtosis calculations of seven or less were considered acceptable (Ware, 2007). Data were screened for outliers and influential cases through an examination of group boxplots. Influential cases were examined to identify possible miscoding or other errors that might affect group mean scores.

Reliability test statistics were calculated before administering statistical tests to ensure all constructs and variables were developed from questions measuring similar characteristics. A Cronbach's Alpha statistic was utilized as the measurement tool for all reliability tests. Alphas of .6 or higher were considered acceptable for this study and are generally considered acceptable by researchers in the communication field (Dozier, 1992).

Independent samples *t*-tests were performed using either two-tailed or one-tailed upper *p-values*. Two-tailed tests were performed on constructs in which there was no expectation that one group would score higher than another. One-tailed tests were performed when there was an expectation that the primary duty PAO group would perform higher than the collateral duty PAO group (Ware, 2007). The *p-value* used was identified in each analysis and all tests utilized a significance level of $\alpha=.05$. A Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, *hereinafter referred to as "Levene's Test,"* statistic was computed for each statistical test. Tests with a significant Levene's Test *p-value* were evaluated using the "equal variances not assumed" test statistic (Ware, 2007). In certain tests where several *t*-tests were conducted on similar variables, to keep the overall probability of committing a type I error at $\alpha=.05_{\text{family}}$, the researcher used the Bonferroni Method to determine the level of statistical significance for each family-wise test (Green & Salkind, 2004). The statistical significance level determined using the Bonferroni Method equaled $\alpha=.05/N_{\text{PC}}$. The probability of committing a type I error was $\alpha=.05$ or less for all statistical tests in R1 and R2.

The following four variables were created for R3:

1. Dependent Variable: **SE** – Among group shared expectation construct scores
2. Independent Variable 1: **TECHNICIAN** – Among group aggregate PAO technician role construct scores
3. Independent Variable 2: **MANAGER** – Among group aggregate PAO manager role construct scores
4. Independent Variable 3: **EXPERIENCE** – Among group aggregate experience construct scores

R3 involved a multiple regression procedure to explore if a linear combination of three independent variables, TECHNICIAN, MANAGER, and EXPERIENCE explained variation in the dependent variable, SE. Data were screened initially for reasonable univariate statistics using the EXPLORE procedure in SPSS (version 15.0 and 16.0). Bivariate scatter plots were created to examine linearity of the data and check for outliers. A linear regression analysis was then run in SPSS to regress SE on TECHNICIAN, MANAGER, and EXPERIENCE. An analysis of the studentized residuals, Mahalanobis D^2 , and Cook's D values was evaluated to determine if there was a need to exclude or alter any influential cases in the data. Finally, a commonality analysis was conducted and the most-parsimonious model selected.

The final series of questions provided an opportunity for participants to expand their responses to include additional information not covered in earlier sections of the survey. This section asked three open-ended questions that requested participants to provide insight into what, if anything, changed with regard to the PAO role since the U.S. Coast Guard transferred from the DOT to the DHS. Additionally, questions asked for responses on what should be changed with regard to the public affairs program and allowed participants an opportunity to provide further explanation or clarification on any item they wish to respond to. Responses to these questions were content analyzed to provide a qualitative data assessment to augment and further the quantitative results, and make appropriate recommendations based on the information received.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

The results of the quantitative survey data and qualitative analysis of open-ended questions on the PAO and command cadre survey provide insight into the expanding role of public affairs in DHS and, to a certain extent, significant gaps in the type, perception, and quality of public affairs services provided by our primary duty PAOs and their collateral duty counterparts, as well as, areas in which both groups show similar results. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to identifying those similarities and gaps, and in the discussion section of Chapter V, providing a recommended course of action to not only capitalize on similarities between the two groups, but also close the gap between the Coast Guard's collateral duty and primary duty PAOs in certain important areas. I received 43 PAO surveys out of a possible 71, which is a 59% response rate and represents more than one-half of the PAOs at major and medium ashore commands in the Coast Guard. I received 29 command cadre surveys out of a possible 68, which is a 43% response rate among personnel carrying out Chief of Staff, Executive Officer, or equivalent duties at major and medium ashore commands in the Coast Guard. The high response rate for both groups provides an excellent indicator of Coast Guard PAO and command cadre willingness to analyze the public affairs profession and their commitment to improving the program. I also received several acknowledgments stating the necessity of public affairs program research and offering additional assistance. Table 1 shows the timeline for PAO and command cadre survey distribution and response.

Table 1
Public Affairs Officer and Command Cadre Survey Timeline

Action	Date	Number of Invites		Number of Completed Surveys	
		PAO	CC	PAO	CC
Initial Survey Sent	10/7/07	71	68	26	12
First Reminder	10/12/07	69*	67*	11	7
Final Reminder	10/17/07	67*	67	6	10

* Indicates omissions from respondents who requested to be removed from the e-mail reminder list after completing the survey.

Overview

PAO survey respondents included 10 PAOs at the Area/District level, *hereinafter referred to as “staff”* (out of 11 invited) and 33 PAOs at the Sector/Group/Air Station/MSST/DOG/Training command level, *hereinafter referred to as “field”* (out of 60 invited). These numbers represent 91% of the PAOs at the staff level and 55% of the PAOs at the field level. Figure 3 depicts the number of responses received versus the number of invitations sent for the PAO survey at each organizational level.

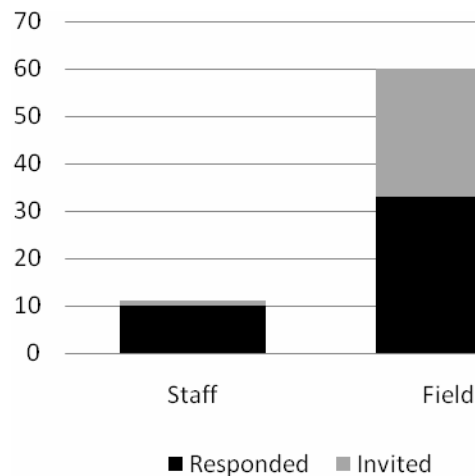


Figure 3. PAO Survey respondents versus invitations by organizational unit

Command cadre survey respondents included seven Chief of Staff officers at the staff level (out of 11 invited), and 22 Deputy Sector Commanders/Executive Officers at the field level (out of 57 invited). These numbers represent 54.5% of invited command cadre personnel at the staff level and 39% of invited command cadre personnel at the field level. Figure 4 depicts the number of responses received versus the number of invitations sent for the command cadre survey at each organizational level.

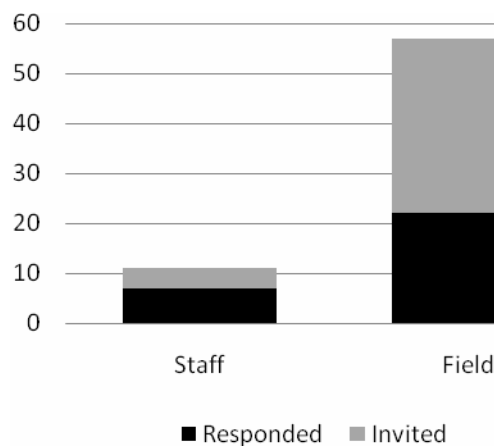


Figure 4. **Command Cadre survey respondents versus invitations by organizational unit**

Respondents were asked to indicate their current paygrade from a selection of choices. Because there are only a few PAOs at certain paygrades such as O-4, choices were grouped to avoid the possibility of deductive disclosure of respondent identity. In contrast, there are several Command cadre members at both the O-5 and O-6 level so no deductive disclosure considerations were necessary for this group. Table 2 depicts the percentage of respondents in each paygrade category.

Table 2.

Respondent paygrades by group and organizational unit

Paygrade	PAO Survey			Command Cadre Survey		
	Staff		Field	Staff		Field
O6				100%		18%
O5						82%
O4/O3	80%		47%			
O2/O1	10%		47%			
E9/E8			3%			
Civilian	10%		3%			

Survey data are presented in two sections; 1) R1 and R2- PAO and command cadre results, 2) R3 – shared expectation results. In the overview section of this chapter, respondents were grouped into one of two categories - those filling positions at the staff organizational level, and those filling positions at the field organizational level. This approach was useful for providing overall demographic data about both PAO and command cadre personnel at two different organizational levels of the Coast Guard. At the staff level all PAO billets are full-time, primary duty assignments. At the field level PAO billets are part-time, collateral duty assignments with only minimal exceptions. Through the survey, however, it became apparent that some commands at the field level have altered their assignments to allow for a full-time, primary duty PAO. In order to do this, the command must have taken the position “out of hide.” In other words, the command must have rearranged the billet structure internally to allow for a primary duty PAO and kept a billeted position unfilled, or transferred the duties of the billeted position to one or more individuals at the unit. Some relevant comments explaining this process included:

“The Sector construct has the PAO listed as a full time staff element, but the billets have not been funded nor filled. ...those full time PAOs that we see at some Sectors are those that have been taken out of hide.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“[The] Sector construct did not provide flexibility to designate a full time Public Affairs Officer. Due to size, otempo, workload, etc. Sector [Name omitted] elected to designate a full time Governmental/Public Affairs Officer. This person is taken out of hide.” (Command Cadre Survey)

The above comments show that, at least for some field units, the PAO position was too demanding for one collateral duty PAO to effectively provide the quality and level of service that the command required. It also became apparent at some field commands that, although a full-time, primary duty PAO had not been designated, two or more individuals had been designated as collateral duty PAOs. This will be explained in greater detail in the discussion section of Chapter V.

PAO Survey results revealed six PAOs, or 19% of respondents at the field level filling full-time, primary duty assignments. Five of these PAOs were at the O-4/O-3 paygrade and one was a civilian. Command cadre results revealed three PAOs or 14% of command cadre respondents at the field level with PAOs filling full time, primary duty assignments. Because this research was primarily directed toward the structure and quality of the PAO assignment as opposed to the organizational level of the assignment, those PAOs filling full-time, primary duty assignments at both the staff and field level in both surveys were regrouped into the primary duty PAO category. This increased the number of primary duty PAOs in the PAO survey from 10 to 16 and decreased the number of collateral duty

PAOs from 32 to 26. One collateral duty PAO respondent stopped answering the survey after question eight. All data provided by that respondent were recorded and utilized for descriptive purposes; however, no data from the respondent were utilized in statistical tests. All analyses from the PAO survey using statistical tests were completed using an $n=16$ for primary duty PAOs and $n=25$ for collateral duty PAOs.

Likewise, in the command cadre survey, initial grouping revealed seven respondents at the staff level and 22 respondents at the field level. After regrouping to include command cadre respondents with PAOs filling primary duty positions into the primary duty PAO category, the primary duty PAO group increased to 10 and the collateral duty PAO group decreased to 19. One respondent in the primary duty PAO command cadre category stopped answering the survey after question 8, resulting in nine respondents being placed into the primary duty PAO command cadre category. All data provided by that respondent was recorded and utilized for descriptive purposes, however, no data from the respondent was utilized in statistical tests. All statistical tests utilized in R2 were completed using an $n=9$ for primary duty PAO command cadre and $n=19$ for collateral duty PAO command cadre.

At ashore units, Coast Guard military personnel rotate duty assignments approximately every three to four years. Civilian personnel generally stay at one duty assignment throughout their employment contract or as long as they desire to remain in that position. Primary duty PAOs at the staff level will likely remain PAOs throughout their tour of duty and follow the same rotation process as other officers in ashore assignments. Primary or collateral duty PAOs at the field level follow the same rotation process as other officers filling ashore duty assignments, however, they may be rotated out of the PAO assignment after a specified time, usually one year, or they may remain in the assignment for longer

periods of time, up to the length of their tour. When PAOs at the field level are rotated out of the PAO assignment, they generally remain at the same unit in another specialty until their tour of duty is complete. To provide a snapshot of the length of time that personnel have been in the PAO position, the researcher asked PAO survey respondents to indicate how long they have been a PAO in their current assignment. Table 3 depicts the results obtained from this question.

Table 3.
Duration as PAO in current assignment

Duration	Primary duty PAO	Collateral duty PAO	Total
< 6 months	25%	23%	24%
6 months to 1 year	6%	4%	5%
1 to 2 years	50%	58%	54%
3 to 4 years	6%	15%	12%
5 or more years	12.5%	0%	5%

Because Coast Guard personnel usually rotate assignments in the summer and the survey was initiated in October, data may show the effect of the assignment process in the “less than 6 months” category if 2007 was a high turnover year for personnel filling PAO positions. Nonetheless, the data show similar durations with most PAOs having been in their current assignment for 1 to 2 years.

R1 and R2– PAO and Command Cadre Results

Experience and Training

PAO respondents were asked to indicate their overall number of years of public affairs experience. Data for this question were encoded into SPSS (version 15.0) according to the following guidelines:

1. All responses were encoded into the lowest integer value. For example, a response of “less than one year” was encoded as 0. A response of “1.6 years” was encoded as 1.
2. The lower limit value was 0; there was no upper limit value.
3. Missing values were not encoded. This resulted in one case being excluded from the data. Therefore, 40 cases were included in the analysis.

Table 4 depicts the years of public affairs experience level at both the primary duty PAO level and the collateral duty PAO level. To simplify the presentation of results, data were recoded into either a “low” (0-5 years), “medium” (6-9 years), or “high” (10 or more years) experience category.

Table 4.
Years of Public Affairs Experience from PAO Survey

		EXPERIENCE					
		Low		Medium		High	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
CAT	Primary duty (16)	8	50.0%			8	50.0%
	Collateral duty (24)	22	91.7%	1	4.2%	1	4.2%
Total		30	75.0%	1	2.5%	9	22.5%

The combined data show that 75% of respondents have less than five years of public affairs experience, while 22.5% are well-seasoned PAOs with significant public affairs experience. Two and a half percent of PAOs have between six and nine years of public affairs experience. The group data also show that at the primary duty level 50% of respondents indicated they had 15 or more years of public affairs experience, and only one respondent indicated less than one year of public affairs experience. The mean years of public affairs experience for this group is 11.69, the standard deviation is 10.25, and the median is 10. Not surprisingly, PAOs at the collateral duty level have significantly less public affairs experience than their primary duty counterparts. Fifty-four percent of respondents indicated less than one year of public affairs experience. One respondent had more than 10 years of public affairs experience. The mean years of public affairs experience for this group is 1.29, the standard deviation is 2.33, and the median is 0.

In addition to years of public affairs experience, PAO respondents were asked to indicate their experience performing public affairs-related activities using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “no experience,” “1,” to “significant experience,” “7.” The question included five subparts intended to measure respondent’s experience in developing strategic messages about homeland security initiatives, discussing a search-and-rescue case with the media, preparing an assessment of the external affairs environment in their community, explaining the Coast Guard’s position on an issue to an activist or citizen group, and evaluating the success of a public affairs campaign. All five subparts were combined into one variable and measured for reliability using a Cronbach’s Alpha statistic (Green & Salkind, 2004). The Cronbach’s Alpha value was .890, indicating satisfactory reliability. The possible minimum and maximum scores for the EXPERIENCE variable were five to 35.

Since primary duty PAOs have significantly more years of public affairs experience than collateral duty PAOs, this test used a one-tailed upper *p-value*. Table 5 depicts data for this variable.

Table 5.
EXPERIENCE Variable (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty (16)	24.25	8.82	77.933	2.21	30
Collateral duty (25)	13.25	5.68	32.27	1.14	19
Levene's Test	F=2.25	p =.141			
Ind. samples t-test	t (39) = 4.431	p<.001*			

* Results were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (one-tailed-upper)

To determine if command cadre's perception PAO's public affairs experience was consistent with PAO results, command cadre were asked to indicate their perception of the PAOs experience level. Questions asked in the command cadre survey were identical to questions in the PAO survey with one exception. Command cadre respondents were not asked to rate the experience level of PAOs in evaluating the success of a public affairs campaign. Instead they were asked to rate the PAOs experience level communicating with the public in a crisis communication event. All five questions were measured for reliability and combined into one variable. The Cronbach's Alpha value was .900, indicating satisfactory reliability. The possible minimum and maximum scores for the EXPERIENCE (Command Cadre Survey) variable were also five to 35. It was not known whether one

command cadre group would have a higher perception of the PAO's experience level than the other group, so this test utilized a two-tailed *p-value*. Table 6 depicts data for this variable using a two-tailed *t*-test, and also show significance at the $\alpha=.05$ level.

Table 6.
EXPERIENCE Variable (Command Cadre Survey)

Group (by PAO status)	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (9)	29.78	4.27	18.19	1.42	12
Collateral duty PAO (19)	22.63	7.11	50.58	1.63	24
Levene's Test	F=3.31	p=.08			
Ind. samples t-test	t(26)=2.77	p=.01*			

**Results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level (two-tailed)*

Results for the EXPERIENCE variable show that the primary duty PAOs have considerably more experience performing the measured public affairs activities than their collateral duty counterparts. Results for this variable also provide evidence that command cadre with primary duty PAOs perceive them to be more prepared to perform the public affairs activities measured than command cadre with collateral duty PAOs.

Respondents of the PAO survey were asked to select their highest level of education achieved and whether it was in a journalism, public relations, communication, or related

field. Table 7 depicts the percentage of respondents at each degree level and if the degrees were in a mass communication field.

Table 7.
Education level and type of degree by group

Group	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	No Mass Comm. degree	One Mass Comm. degree	Two or more Mass Comm. degrees
Primary duty PAO	87.5%	25%	69%	31%	0%
Collateral duty PAO	84%	20%	92%	4%	4%
Total	85%	22.5%	83%	15%	2%

The data depict a well-educated public affairs workforce. Eighty-five percent (35) of respondents have completed a bachelor's degree and 22.5% (9) of respondents have completed a master's degree. When separated into primary duty PAO and collateral duty PAO groups, the data show similar education levels. Differences in percentages of respondents achieving master's degrees may be, in part, because nearly 50% of collateral duty PAOs are at the O-1/O-2 paygrade level. The Coast Guard has robust advanced education opportunities, however, many programs target officers in the O-3/O-4 paygrade level.

When asked if their degrees were in a journalism or related field, 31% (5) of primary duty PAOs indicated at least one degree in a journalism field, while 4% (1) of collateral duty PAOs indicated at least one degree in a journalism field. These differences may also be, in part, explained by the number of primary duty PAOs who have attained a master's degree through the Coast Guard public affairs advanced education program. Although formal education played a less-significant role in the results of the Excellence Study than the researchers had anticipated (Dozier, 1992), it is still a vital component of those organizations that practiced excellent public relations.

Respondents were also asked if they had attended public affairs training offered through the Coast Guard including public affairs "road shows." The Coast Guard does not have a dedicated, formal PAO training program, but does send PAOs to DINFOS for training in either an eight-week (PAOQC) program or five-day (CGPAC) program. The public affairs program also uses experienced public affairs personnel from either the headquarters level or regional level to travel to various units to provide training for two to three days. Forty-four percent (18) attended DINFOS CGPAC, 37% (15) stated they had no formal public affairs training, 17% (7) attended road show training, 15% (6) of respondents stated they attended DINFOS PAOQC, 12% (5) were prior PA specialists, and 10% (4) attended other DINFOS training.

In the Excellence Study, members of the dominant coalition with formal public relations training had a better understanding of what public relations could and should do for the organization (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). This understanding helped create increased shared expectations between members of the dominant coalition and the public relations practitioner. Practitioners in organizations with dominant coalitions having little

public relations training expressed more role ambiguity than practitioners in organizations with dominant coalitions having significant public relations training (Dozier, 1992).

Question 5 on the command cadre survey asked respondents if they had received formal education or formal, dedicated public affairs training. Fifty-three percent (15) indicated no formal public affairs training, 32% (9) indicated DINFOS training, 7% (2) indicated various other formal public affairs training, 4% (1) indicated both a mass communication degree and DINFOS training, and 4% (1) indicated a mass communication degree but no DINFOS training.

The high percentage of respondents in both the PAO and command cadre categories indicating no public affairs education or training provides an opportunity to increase public affairs effectiveness throughout the organization. Since the Coast Guard's ability to send PAOs to formal training is dependent upon DINFOS' availability to train Coast Guard personnel, as well as individual unit schedules, operations, and competing priorities, providing increased training is a challenging, but nonetheless important task. Chapter V provides recommendations to increase training opportunities for both PAOs and command cadre members.

Roles

Four major public relations roles were identified in the literature - the technician, the expert prescriber, the problem-solving facilitator, and the communication facilitator. Research indicated that three of these roles, expert prescriber, problem-solving facilitator, and communication facilitator, were highly correlated and performed interchangeably by practitioners, thereby forming a single role, the public relations manager (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). PAO and command cadre respondents were asked several questions intended

to measure the relative importance of each of these roles to the success of the PAO, their confidence in the ability of the PAO to enact each role, and the likelihood that the dominant coalition would utilize them for each role. All questions used either a five-point or seven-point Likert scale to measure responses and were reverse scored when necessary and converted to *z-scores* prior to analysis. Since it was not known whether one group would score higher than another group on any one variable, all tests in the public relations roles section of this analysis utilized two-tailed *t*-tests.

Public Relations Technician Role

Eight questions were utilized in both surveys to measure the public relations technician variable. Questions asked about the importance of activities associated with the technician role to the PAOs success at the unit and how well activities associated with the technician role described the work that the PAO did at the unit. The Cronbach’s Alpha score for this variable on the PAO survey was .711, indicating satisfactory reliability. Table 8 depicts the descriptive statistics and results for this analysis using standardized scores and two-tailed *p-values*.

Table 8.
TECHNICIAN Variable (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (16)	.84	4.71	22.19	1.18	17.83
Collateral duty PAO (25)	-.54	4.54	20.62	.91	19.55
Levene’s Test					
	F=.068	p=.795			
Ind. samples t-test					
	t(39) = .93	p=.358			

No reverse scoring or conversion to *z-scores* was necessary in the command cadre results for the TECHNICIAN variable. The possible range of scores for this variable was between eight and 56, and the Cronbach’s Alpha score was .825, indicating satisfactory reliability. Table 9 depicts the results using two-tailed *p-values*.

Table 9.
TECHNICIAN Variable (Command Cadre survey)

Group (by PAO status)	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Range	Std. Error
Primary duty PAO (9)	38.79	9.07	82.28	29	3.02
Collateral duty PAO (19)	39.86	8.53	72.80	28	1.96
Levene’s Test	F=.86	p=.772			
Ind. samples t-test	t(26)= -.30	p=.765			

Results from this analysis do not show statistically significant differences between the two groups using two-tailed *p-values* at either the PAO or command cadre level. Both PAO groups showed similarities regarding the importance of the technician role to the PAO position, similar confidence levels in their ability to enact the technician role, and similar likelihood that dominant coalition members would utilize their expertise as a public relations technician. Command cadre results depict a perception of a PAO workforce that provides technician related services to the unit, but does not necessarily perceive those activities to be crucial to the PAOs success at the unit.

Public Relations Manager Roles

Three separate constructs, the expert prescriber role, the problem-solving facilitator role, and the communication facilitator role, were analyzed separately and then combined to obtain overall scores for the MANAGER variable. All questions from the PAO survey were converted to *z-scores* prior to analysis and reverse-coded when necessary. Table 10 depicts the reliability scores, descriptive statistics, and significance tests for each individual construct using a two-tailed test. Tests utilized the Bonferroni Method to determine statistical significance against a threshold of $\alpha=.017$ for each construct. Results were significant at the $\alpha=.017$ level.

Table 10.
MANAGER Constructs (PAO Survey)

Construct	Alpha	Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Expert Prescriber	.714	Primary Duty	1.78	2.89	8.38	.72	11.96
		Collateral Duty	-1.14	3.28	10.75	.66	13.09
Levene's Test	F=.463	p=.500					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(39)=2.9	p=.006*					
Problem-Solving Facilitator	.829	Primary Duty	3.73	4.67	21.78	1.17	18.53
		Collateral Duty	-2.39	4.45	19.76	.89	21.09
Levene's Test	F=.248	p=.621					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(39)=3.86	p=<.001*					
Communication Facilitator	.865	Primary Duty	3.73	5.44	29.54	1.36	21.08
		Collateral Duty	-2.38	4.61	21.26	.92	18.79
Levene's Test	F=.248	p=.621					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(39)=3.86	p=<.001*					

* Results were significant at the $\alpha=.017$ level (two-tailed)

A skewness value of -2.014 for the primary duty Problem-Solving Facilitator construct was noted when each construct was analyzed independently, however, when role measures were combined skewness values were reasonable. A single variable, MANAGER, was developed by summing the combined Expert Prescriber, Problem-Solving Facilitator,

and Communication Facilitator standardized scores. The Cronbach's Alpha for this combined measure was .908. Table 11 depicts descriptive statistics and results for this variable. The overall manager role *t*-test was significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level.

Table 11.
MANAGER Variable (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO	9.59	11.10	123.20	2.77	42.68
Collateral duty PAO	-5.91	11	120.99	2.20	48.63
Levene's Test	F=.007	p=.933			
Ind. Samples t-test	t(39)=4.39	p<.001*			

**Results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level (two-tailed)*

Similar to the PAO survey, three separate constructs were developed to measure command cadre's perception of the expert prescriber role, the problem-solving facilitator role, and the communication facilitator role. All constructs were analyzed separately and then combined to obtain overall scores for the MANAGER variable. All questions were converted to *z-scores* prior to analysis. No reverse-coding was necessary. Table 12 depicts the reliability scores, descriptive statistics, and test results for each individual construct using a two-tailed test. Tests utilized the Bonferroni Method to determine statistical significance against a threshold of $\alpha=.017$ for each construct.

Table 12.

Reliability Analysis and Descriptive Statistics – Command Cadre Perception of PAO Manager Role Constructs

Construct	Alpha	Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Expert Prescriber	.702	Primary Duty	1.49	2.01	4.04	.67	5.47
		Collateral Duty	-.71	3.70	13.67	.85	13.40
Levene's Test	F=1.9	p=.18					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(26)=1.66	p=.109					
Problem-Solving Facilitator	.873	Primary Duty	4.86	2.79	7.78	.93	8.52
		Collateral Duty	-2.30	6.27	39.39	1.44	19.41
Levene's Test	F=7.10	p=.013*					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(25.98)=4.18	p<.001**					
Communication Facilitator	.899	Primary Duty	4.98	4.66	21.70	1.55	13
		Collateral Duty	-2.36	7.90	62.47	1.81	26.11
Levene's Test	F=5.36	p=.029*					
Ind. Samples <i>t</i> -test	t(24.47)=3.08	p=.005**					

* Levene's Test results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level

** Results were significant at the $\alpha=.017$ level using equal variances not assumed

A single variable, MANAGER, was developed by summing the combined Expert Prescriber, Problem-Solving Facilitator, and Communication Facilitator standardized scores.

The Cronbach's Alpha for this combined measure was .939. Skewness and kurtosis

calculations for the combined measure were reasonable and no outliers were discovered.

Table 13 depicts descriptive statistics and results for this variable. Levene’s Test results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level so the researcher used the equal variances not assumed test statistic.

Table 13.
MANAGER Variable (Command Cadre Survey)

Group (by PAO status)	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO	11.34	8.42	70.93	2.81	24.19
Collateral duty PAO	-5.37	17.07	291.49	3.92	56.99
Levene’s Test	F=5.10	<i>p=.033*</i>			
Ind. Samples t-test	<i>t(25.88)=3.47</i>	<i>P=.002**</i>			

**Levene’s Test results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level*

***Results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level using equal variances not assumed (two-tailed)*

Collectively, results for this variable depict a primary duty PAO group that on average plays the manager role more frequently than their collateral duty counterparts. In the Excellence Study, the manager role helped practitioners move from support roles in the organization to the role of professional communicator and provided vital public relations services to organizations that practiced excellent public relations (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). The manager role also increased shared expectations between the public relations department and senior management through

the use of boundary spanning and formal research activities (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). The results provide evidence of a statistically significant difference between the two groups at all levels on the PAO survey and at the communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator level on the command cadre survey. Results also show potential disparity between field command cadre about what the role of the PAO should be at the unit. For instance, the minimum and maximum range for the problem-solving facilitator construct at the collateral duty PAO level depicts values between -10.81 and 8.60. There are no outliers or extreme values in the distribution when looking at the box and whiskers plot, however, and the histogram shows nearly equal response levels throughout the range. In contrast, at the primary duty PAO command cadre level, the minimum and maximum range depicts values between .11 and 8.63. There are no outliers or extreme values in the distribution when looking at the box and whiskers plot and the histogram also shows similar response levels throughout the range. The communication facilitator construct is very similar. At the collateral duty PAO command cadre level, scores range from -15.47 to 10.65, and again there are no outliers or extreme values. At the primary duty PAO command cadre level, the range is between 0 and 13 with no outliers or extreme values. Command cadre with primary duty PAOs show little variation in their scores across the three constructs; however, command cadre with collateral duty PAOs show a much larger variation.

Although each unit within the Coast Guard is different, and each has different operational tempos and operating environments, public affairs opportunities are similar. Every unit must communicate effectively with external stakeholders and every unit must develop solutions to public affairs issues to have excellent public affairs programs. The

results point to disparity between field units about who should predominately communicate with external stakeholders and who should develop solutions to public affairs issues and manage conflict – the PAO or command cadre. This gap could lead to considerable role ambiguity for collateral duty PAOs at the field level.

Models of Communication

A series of four questions were asked on each survey to determine respondent's agreement with each of the four models of communication identified in the Excellence Study. Press agency and public information are one-way models of communication. Two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication are two-way models of communication and considered essential to those organizations that practiced excellent public relations. Research by Dozier (1992) showed that the U.S. Navy predominantly practiced the public information model of communication (Dozier, 1992). It was expected that the Coast Guard would show similar results since one of the four goals of Coast Guard public affairs is to “educate the American public about Coast Guard activities, both good and bad, through the dissemination of timely information” (U.S. Coast Guard, 2003). It was also expected that the press agency model of communication would show low approval rates since the Gillett Amendment forbids the use of taxpayer money to be used for “solely publicity generating activities” by federal agencies (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). It was not known whether two-way models of communication would show high or low approval rates; however, high reliability organizations (HROs) use two-way communication extensively to mitigate risk and improve HRO performance. Each of the four questions used a seven-item Likert scale to measure PAO's and command cadre's agreement with each model of communication. The scale ranged from “completely disagree,” “1,” to “completely agree,” “7.” Responses were

recoded according to the following guidelines: Responses of “1” and “2” were recoded as “disagree.” Responses of “3”, “4”, and “5” were recoded as “neutral.” Responses of “6” and “7” were recoded as “agree.” Table 14 and 15 depict the number and percentage of responses for each model of communication.

Table 14.
Models of Communication (PAO Survey)

Model	Group	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Press agency	Primary duty PAO (16)	12	3	1
	Collateral duty PAO (25)	16	7	2
Total		68%	24%	7%
Public information	Primary duty PAO (16)	0	2	14
	Collateral duty PAO (25)	0	4	21
Total		0%	15%	85%
Two-way asymmetrical	Primary duty PAO (16)	1	8	7
	Collateral duty PAO (25)	2	9	14
Total		7%	42%	51%
Two-way symmetrical	Primary duty PAO (16)	2	10	4
	Collateral duty PAO (25)	8	13	4
Total		24%	57%	19%

Table 15.
Models of Communication (Command Cadre Survey)

Model	Group (by PAO type)	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Press agency	Primary duty PAO (9)	4	4	1
	Collateral duty PAO (19)	10	7	2
Total		50%	39%	11%
Public information	Primary duty PAO (9)	1	2	6
	Collateral duty PAO (19)	1	3	15
Total		7%	18%	75%
Two-way asymmetrical	Primary duty PAO (9)	0	5	4
	Collateral duty PAO (19)	1	8	10
Total		4%	46%	50%
Two-way symmetrical	Primary duty PAO (9)	0	2	7
	Collateral duty PAO (19)	1	7	11
Total		4%	32%	64%

The combined results show that in general PAOs and command cadre disagree with the press agency approach to public affairs, agree with the public information approach, and show a neutral view or agreement with the two-way models of communication.

Interestingly, both PAOs and command cadre showed very similar percentages for each model both within groups and among groups. The predominantly public information communication approach is in keeping with public affairs objectives set by the public affairs program manager. This result provides solid evidence that, in terms of one-way communication strategies, PAOs and command cadre disagree with a press agency approach

to public affairs, and agree with a predominantly public information approach to public affairs. These data also offer evidence that PAOs and command cadre agree with two-way communication strategies designed to either persuade stakeholders or manage conflict with stakeholders in certain situations. Since very few PAOs or command cadre have formal training in communication approaches, this finding may provide evidence that HRO communication principles, which rely on two-way communication strategies to increase safety and performance, have integrated into the public affairs environment.

Public Affairs Research

In prior studies, research provided valuable information for dominant coalitions to use in their strategic decision-making process and helped practitioners move from the technician role to the manager role (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In this study, a series of 11 questions were asked on the PAO survey to determine the level of informal and formal public affairs research activities employed by PAOs. The first set of four questions comprised the RESEARCH variable and was developed to measure the level of representational boundary spanning conducted by both primary duty and collateral duty PAOs. The second set of seven questions was designed to measure the level of formal research and informational boundary spanning conducted by primary duty and collateral duty PAOs for descriptive purposes. In the command cadre survey, a set of four questions identical to the PAO survey comprised the RESEARCH variable and was asked to determine the level of representational boundary spanning activities at the command cadre level. Formal research and informational boundary spanning questions were not asked in the command cadre survey.

No recoding or transformation to *z-scores* was necessary for questions comprising the RESEARCH variable. All questions were analyzed for reliability prior to being combined. The Cronbach's Alpha score for this variable was .921 on the PAO survey and .921 on the command cadre survey, indicating an acceptable level of reliability. The possible range of scores was between 5 and 20. Table 16 and Table 17 show the results for this analysis.

Table 16.
RESEARCH (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (16)	14.87	3.96	15.72	.99	16
Collateral duty PAO (25)	14.52	4.07	15	.81	16
Levene's Test	F = .037	p=.848			
Ind. samples t-test	t(39) = .273	p=.786			

Table 17.
RESEARCH (Command Cadre Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (9)	15.78	2.77	7.69	.92	8
Collateral duty PAO (19)	15.16	3.59	12.81	.82	16
Levene's Test	F = .064	p=.802			
Ind. samples t-test	t(26) = .457	p=.651			

The results depict both PAOs and command cadre performing medium-to-high levels of representational boundary spanning at the primary duty PAO and collateral duty PAO level. Within groups, each is similar to the other in their likelihood to conduct representational boundary spanning activities. Looking at the mean scores, both PAOs and command cadre could be categorized as “situational” representational boundary spanners. Depending upon the type of stakeholder and situation, PAOs and command cadre may or may not seek input from external stakeholders before the organization introduces an initiative to the public. Data for each individual question showed an increased likelihood for both PAO and command cadre to seek input from maritime partners and commercial interests than community leaders and activist groups. Differences in the likelihood of seeking input from community leaders may also be a function of the structure of each command. Many commands have created External Affairs components that work extensively with government elected officials and representatives. Other commands utilize the traditional Public Affairs structure that focuses most of its effort on media. Differences between these two structures may have implications for the quantity and type of representational boundary spanning activities that take place within individual public affairs components.

The PAO survey asked a series of seven questions to determine the level of formal research and informational boundary spanning at both the primary duty and collateral duty PAO levels. No recoding or *z-score* transformations were necessary for this set of questions. All questions were combined and analyzed for reliability prior to running statistical tests. The Cronbach’s Alpha score for this construct was .856, indicating an acceptable level of reliability. Descriptive statistics for the combined measure were within acceptable standards. The possible range of scores on this construct was between 7 and 35. Because the primary-

duty PAO group had higher group scores on the MANAGER variable, a one-tailed upper *t*-test was completed. Table 18 provides the results for this measure. Levene's Test results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level so the researcher used the equal variances not assumed test statistic.

Table 18.
Formal Research and Informational Boundary Spanning (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO	15.63	7.38	54.52	1.85	26
Collateral duty PAO	10.58	3.13	9.8	.63	13
Levene's Test	F = 6.16	<i>p</i> = .017*			
Ind. samples t-test	<i>t</i>(18.48) = 2.59	<i>p</i> = .018*			

* *Levene's Test results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level*

** *Results were significant using equal variances not assumed (one-tailed-upper)*

The results show that collectively the primary duty PAO group conducts more formal public affairs research than the collateral duty PAO group. It should be noted, however, that the box and whiskers plot for the primary duty PAO category showed three influential values on the high end of the range with values of 33, 30, and 25. The next highest score was 16. A second analysis was completed with the three influential cases recoded to values of 19, 18, and 17 respectively. This analysis kept the values at the high end of the range, but lowered the group mean to 13.5, which was more in line with the data trend. The amended Levene's

Test statistic was non-significant at $p=.65$. The independent samples t -test statistic using the recoded values was significant at $p=.007$.

Since many formal research activities require specialized knowledge, the results may reflect the higher number of individuals who have completed advanced public relations training. Results for the formal research variable show an opportunity for the Coast Guard to provide formal research training designed to help both primary duty and collateral duty PAOs gain increased proficiency in research techniques that can provide valuable information to the dominant coalition. Formal research training may also lead to increased shared expectations about the public affairs function between PAOs and senior leadership and help those PAOs providing predominately support roles to manager roles.

Shared Expectations

Creating shared expectations about the public relations function through representation in or access to the dominant coalition (DC) is paramount for public relations practitioners in organizations that practiced excellent public relations (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Ten questions on both the PAO survey and command cadre survey were combined to form the DC variable. These questions measured respondent's likelihood that s/he would involve the PAO, or if s/he were a PAO, be involved in managing the unit's communication response on issues involving external stakeholders, how often PAOs and command cadre met outside regularly scheduled staff meetings to discuss strategic communication issues, and how often information provided by the public affairs division was an important part of the command cadre decision-making process. Since public relations experience was a strong factor in developing shared expectations between the practitioner and dominant coalitions in the Excellence Study, and the primary duty PAO group had

significantly more public affairs experience than the collateral duty PAO group, this variable utilized a one-tailed upper *t*-test. Questions were reverse scored when necessary and transformed into *z*-scores before being analyzed. The Cronbach's Alpha statistic for this construct was .915 on the PAO survey and .885 on the command cadre survey, indicating satisfactory reliability. Table 19 and Table 20 show descriptive statistics and results for this variable using standardized scores.

Table 19.
DC Variable (PAO Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (16)	2.07	6.26	39.14	1.56	23.3
Collateral duty PAO (25)	-1.32	8.08	65.35	1.62	29.77
Levene's Test	F= 1.99	p= .166			
Ind. Samples t-test	t(39)=1.42	p= .081			

Table 20.
DC Variable (Command Cadre Survey)

Group	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Std. Error	Range
Primary duty PAO (9)	3.38	7.09	50.29	2.36	21.17
Collateral duty PAO (19)	-1.60	6.55	42.92	1.50	24.23
Levene's Test	F= .073	p= .789			
Ind. Samples t-test	t(26)=1.83	p= .039*			

* *Results were significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level (one-tailed-upper)*

Results from the command cadre analysis show that, on average, primary duty PAOs were more involved with managing the unit's communication response on issues involving external stakeholders, they met more often with members of the dominant coalition to discuss strategic communication issues, and information provided by the primary duty PAO was more likely to be an important part of the command cadre decision-making process than their collateral duty counterparts. Results for the PAO survey were non-significant using a $\alpha=.05$ significance level, however, mean scores for the primary duty PAO category were higher than the collateral duty group. Because shared expectations between management and the PAO are core components in organizations that practice excellent public relations, results show an opportunity for the public affairs program to focus on characteristics that increase shared expectations between PAOs and dominant coalitions at the collateral duty PAO level. R3 explores whether the TECHNICIAN, MANAGER, and EXPERIENCE variables contribute to involvement in the dominant coalition. The results of this question may provide

insight into areas that Coast Guard leadership can focus on to close the gap between the two groups and increase public affairs effectiveness throughout the organization.

HRO

The final aspect of R1 and R2 involved three questions on the PAO survey and two questions on the command cadre survey designed to discover whether HRO concepts that have been vigorously integrated into the Coast Guard's operational structure have also been integrated into the public affairs structure. Questions asked respondents to identify the PAOs' perceived level of autonomy in the organization and whether that autonomy level would increase, decrease, or remain the same in a crisis situation. One HRO study found that under normal conditions decisions would be moved up or down the chain of command depending upon the perceived importance of the decision (Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994). This study also found that regardless of rank, however, during time-sensitive crisis events as experience and expertise increased, decision-making also increased. Table 21 and Table 22 depict the perceived level of PAO autonomy from both the PAO and command cadre perspective.

Table 21.
Level of Autonomy (PAO Survey)

Group	Low (no autonomy to very limited autonomy)	Medium (somewhat limited to somewhat unlimited autonomy)	High (nearly unlimited to unlimited autonomy)
Primary duty PAO (16)	6% (1)	69% (11)	25% (4)
Collateral duty PAO (25)	8% (2)	76% (19)	16% (4)
Total	7% (3)	73% (30)	20% (8)

Table 22.
Level of Autonomy (Command Cadre Survey)

Group (by PAO status)	Low (no autonomy to very limited autonomy)	Medium (somewhat limited to somewhat unlimited autonomy)	High (nearly unlimited to unlimited autonomy)
Primary duty PAO (9)	0% (0)	78% (7)	22% (2)
Collateral duty PAO (19)	10.5% (2)	79% (15)	10.5% (2)
Total	7.5% (2)	78.5% (22)	14% (4)

Autonomy scores are very similar for both the primary duty PAO and collateral duty PAO groups. Most PAOs have a level of autonomy that varies from somewhat limited to somewhat unlimited. Since most PAOs in both groups are junior officers in the O2 to O3

paygrade, this is an expected result and consistent with the level of responsibility given to most junior officers. Table 23 and Table 24 depict whether respondents believed they would have more, less, or the same level of autonomy during a crisis event by group.

Table 23.
Autonomy during crisis event by group (PAO Survey)

Group (by PAO status)	More Autonomy	Less Autonomy	Same Autonomy
Primary duty PAO (16)	50% (8)	19% (3)	31% (5)
Collateral duty PAO (25)	24% (6)	44% (11)	32% (8)
Total	34% (14)	34% (14)	32% (13)

Table 24.
Autonomy during crisis event by group (Command Cadre Survey)

Group (by PAO status)	More Autonomy	Less Autonomy	Same Autonomy
Primary duty PAO (9)	56% (5)	11% (1)	33% (3)
Collateral duty PAO (19)	42% (8)	37% (7)	21% (4)
Total	46% (13)	29% (8)	25% (7)

When looked at by primary duty or collateral duty group, results show similar percentages of respondents in the more, less, and same autonomy categories. In Table 25 data are categorized by years of public affairs experience rather than group.

Table 25.
Autonomy during crisis event by PAO experience level

Group	More autonomy	Less autonomy	Same autonomy	Total
0-4 years of experience	21% (6)	45% (13)	34% (10)	29
5 or more years of experience	67% (8)	8% (1)	25% (3)	12
Total	34% (14)	34% (14)	32% (13)	41

Results provide support for the contention that autonomy increases in HROs as experience and expertise increase. Sixty-seven percent of respondents with more than five years of experience stated they would have more autonomy in a crisis situation. Only 8% stated they would have less autonomy. In contrast, 45% of respondents with less than five years of experience stated they would have less autonomy, and only 21% stated they would have more autonomy. One-quarter to one-third of respondents in both groups stated they would have the same level of autonomy regardless of the situation.

Additionally, on the PAO survey, respondents were asked to identify how often they participated in systematic review and feedback processes known as “hotwashes.” Results for this question are depicted in Table 26.

Table 26.
Level of involvement in unit hotwashes

Group	Low (never or rarely)	Medium (25 to 75 percent of the time)	High (always or almost always)
Primary duty PAO (16)	37.5% (6)	31.25% (5)	31.25% (5)
Collateral duty PAO (25)	56% (14)	20% (5)	24% (6)
Total	49% (20)	24% (10)	27% (11)

Although the PAO may not always know when other divisions are conducting hot washes, it is likely that the PAO will at least know about most planned hotwashes because they generally require cross-coordination between departments. According to the data, involvement in hotwashes is largely dependent upon the individual unit. Scores were predominately in the low category for both groups with the primary duty PAO group scoring slightly better than the collateral duty PAO group in the medium and high categories. Regardless of whether external communication was involved in the situation leading to a hotwash, integrating the PAO into the review process provides opportunities for the PAO to develop increased understanding of operational facets of the Coast Guard and allows PAOs and Command Cadre to develop increased shared expectations about how the public affairs component can increase operational excellence.

R3 – Shared Expectation Results

R3 explored the extent to which a linear combination of three independent variables - 1) PAO technician characteristics (TECHNICIAN), 2) PAO manager characteristics (MANAGER), and 3) PAO experience characteristics (EXPERIENCE) - explained variation

in the dependent variable, shared expectation characteristics (SE). All variables were developed using aggregate scores from similarly worded questions on both surveys. For instance, if one question on the PAO survey was phrased “I write press releases” to measure the PAO technician variable and a similar question on the command cadre survey was phrased “the PAO writes press releases,” they were both considered as measuring the same characteristic and combined into one measure, TECHNICIAN₁. However, if a question on the PAO survey was phrased “how much experience do you have evaluating the success of a public affairs campaign,” and a similar question on the command cadre survey was phrased “how much experience does the PAO have communicating with the public in a crisis communication situation,” they were not considered to be measuring the same characteristic and therefore not combined into the EXPERIENCE variable.

All questions that met the criteria for inclusion in R3 and related to the measured variables were combined by category and summed to create the four overall measures. The TECHNICIAN variable combined scores from eight questions. The MANAGER variable combined scores from 16 questions measuring three constructs, the expert prescriber role, the communication facilitator role, and the problem-solving facilitator role. The EXPERIENCE variable combined scores from four questions. The SE variable combined scores from 10 questions. Questions were reverse-scored when necessary. No *z-score* transformations were necessary for R3.

All analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 15.0). Univariate descriptive statistics for the four variables were analyzed using the EXPLORE procedure to ensure the data were reasonable and no anomalies were discovered. Bivariate scatterplots were constructed to screen for nonlinearity and bivariate outliers. A multiple regression analysis

was then run to determine the relationship between the dependent variable (SE) and the independent variables (TECHNICIAN, MANAGER, and EXPERIENCE). Results were evaluated to determine outliers and the potential need to exclude influential cases from the analysis. A commonality analysis was then conducted and the most-parsimonious model selected.

Descriptive statistics for the analyses are contained in Table 27. The data set contained 69 cases (41 from the PAO survey and 28 from the command cadre survey).

Table 27.
Univariate Descriptive Statistics

	SE	TECHNICIAN	MANAGER	EXPERIENCE
Mean	37.21	37.97	75.56	16.67
Std. Dev.	8.45	8.90	18.66	7.03
Minimum	11.00	14.00	34.00	4.00
Maximum	50.00	56.00	106.00	28.00
Skewness	-.503	-.243	-.244	-.112
Kurtosis	.118	-.180	-.901	-1.094

All values in Table 27 were considered reasonable. The bivariate scatterplots indicated linear relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable. A multiple regression procedure was then completed to regress SE on TECHNICIAN, MANAGER, and EXPERIENCE. A large studentized residual value of 3.11 was identified from case 63. The data from that case did not show any unreasonable values or misentered data. Case 63 also shows the highest Mahalanobis Distance value of 9.25. When compared against a

$\chi^2_{.001(3)}=16.26$, this value is acceptable. Case 63 also had the highest Cook's Distance value of .18. Compared with a standard of 1.0 this value is reasonable. Using a standard of $4/(n-m-1)=.06$, this value would be considered high. Sorting the data by Cook's D values showed similar calculations and given that the data for this case seemed reasonable it was included in the final analysis. Table 28 provides the correlation matrix for the full model.

Table 28.
Correlation Matrix

	Mean	Std. Dev.	SE	TECHNICIAN	MANAGER	EXPERIENCE
DC	37.21	8.45	1.0	.434	.699	.587
TECHNICIAN	37.97	8.90		1.0	.581	.493
MANAGER	75.56	18.66			1.0	.782
EXPERIENCE	16.67	7.03				1.0

Correlation coefficients are fairly high, indicating that some variables may be intercorrelated. The multiple regression analysis indicated that the three independent variables explained 49.4% of the variation in shared expectation scores ($F(3,65) = 21.13, p < .001$). Table 29 shows the full model.

Table 29.
Full Regression Model

	Constant	TECHNICIAN	MANAGER	EXPERIENCE
Raw Coefficient	13.37	.034	.272	.171
Beta Weight		.036	.600	.101
<i>t</i> -statistic		.328	3.954	.710
<i>p</i> -value		.744	<.001*	.481

*Results are significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level

Table 29 reveals that only MANAGER added a statistically significant unique contribution to explaining variance in shared expectation scores between Coast Guard PAOs and dominant coalitions. The commonality analysis depicted in Table 30 explains how the variables relate.

Table 30.
Multiple Regression Commonality Analysis

	TECHNICIAN	MANAGER	EXPERIENCE
Unique to TECHNICIAN	.001	---	---
Unique to MANAGER	---	.122	---
UNIQUE to EXPERIENCE	---	---	.004
Common to TECHNICIAN and MANAGER	.027	.027	---
Common to TECHNICIAN and EXPERIENCE	.000	---	.000
Common to MANAGER and EXPERIENCE	---	.180	.180
Common to ALL	.160	.160	.160
Total	.188	.489	.344

Table 30 reveals that TECHNICIAN and EXPERIENCE contributed 18.8% and 34.4% of the variation in SE scores; however, those contributions were not unique – the variation was common to all variables. The most-parsimonious model included only the variable MANAGER and explained 48.9% of the variation in shared expectation scores between the PAO and command cadre. The equation for that model was $SE = 13.274 + .317* \text{MANAGER}$.

This finding supports Excellence Study findings that a major predictor of public relations excellence was through the manager role. It does not mean that the TECHNICIAN and EXPERIENCE variables should be excluded as predictors of achieving shared communication expectations between PAOs and command cadre. Based on the medium correlation between TECHNICIAN and MANAGER, and the high correlation between EXPERIENCE and MANAGER, it intuitively means that a necessary precursor to playing the role of public affairs manager in the Coast Guard is that the practitioner must have public affairs experience and sufficient knowledge to play the technician role. This finding also shows the imprecise nature of most forms of social science research. Over one-half of the variation in shared expectation scores remained unknown. PAO and command cadre values, personalities, and any number of additional factors contribute to creating shared expectations between PAOs and command cadre. Nonetheless, this finding provides opportunities for public affairs leadership to focus on skills and characteristics that will enable the practitioner to learn and put into practice the manager roles of problem-solving facilitator, communication facilitator, and to a certain extent, expert prescriber. It also points to opportunities to focus effort at the command cadre level. In the Excellence Study, dominant coalitions with the most knowledge and training about the public relations function had

higher levels of shared expectations than dominant coalitions without public relations training. In this study, command cadre knowledge and training about the public affairs function is included in the unknown variation of the regression analysis. Additional effort at the command cadre level to train Coast Guard leaders about the public affairs function may lead to increased shared expectations, which in turn may lead to better and more consistent public affairs programs throughout the service.

Quality Measures and Summary of Findings

The final series of four closed-ended questions on both surveys asked respondents to rate, via a Likert scale, 1) The level of value (1=no value, 7=very high value) the public affairs division provided relative to other typical divisions in the unit, 2) The level of support (1=no support, 7=very strong support) the PAO (command cadre survey) and command cadre (PAO survey) provided with regard to the public affairs function at the unit, 3) How satisfied (1=not at all satisfied, 7=completely satisfied) PAOs and command cadre were with the public affairs program at the unit, and 4) The level of contribution (1=no contribution, 7=very strong contribution) the public affairs division made to the strategic planning function at the unit. All 69 responses were reverse scored when necessary, combined, and evaluated according to group membership; primary duty PAO ($n=25$) and collateral duty PAO ($n=44$). A one-tailed *t-test* value was utilized because the primary duty PAO category was expected to score higher on each measure. To minimize the probability of committing a type I error on the quality measures, all tests were evaluated using the Bonferroni Method. For all statistical tests in this section, $\alpha=.0125$. Table 31 provides the results for this analysis.

Table 31.

Quality Measures (Combined PAO and Command Cadre scores)

Measure	Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Range	Std Error
<u>Value</u>	PD PAO	5.49	1.32	1.75	5	.26
	CD PAO	4.41	1.51	2.29	6	.23
Levene's Test	F=.601	p=.441				
Ind. Samples <i>t-test</i>	t=2.98	p=.002*				
<u>Support</u>	PD PAO	5.57	1.44	2.08	5	.29
	CD PAO	5.07	1.39	1.93	5	.21
Levene's Test	F=.155	p=.695				
Ind. Samples <i>t-test</i>	t=1.43	p=.079				
<u>Satisfaction</u>	PD PAO	5.16	1.28	1.64	5	.26
	CD PAO	4.27	1.58	2.48	6	.24
Levene's Test	F=2.31	p=.133				
Ind. Samples <i>t-test</i>	t=2.40	p=.0095*				
<u>Strategic</u>	PD PAO	4.12	1.48	2.19	6	.30
	CD PAO	3.09	1.58	2.50	5	.24
Levene's Test	F=1.04	p=.311				
Ind. Samples <i>t-test</i>	t=2.66	p=.005*				

* Results were significant at the $\alpha=.0125$ level using the Bonferroni Method

Three out of the four quality measures showed statistically significant differences between the primary duty and collateral duty PAO groups. On average, the public affairs division contributed significantly more value compared to other typical divisions at the unit when the public affairs officer was a primary duty PAO. Some of this difference may be explained by the fact that public affairs divisions with primary duty PAOs (at the staff level) tend to have PA specialists working at the unit. Many units with collateral duty PAOs (at the field level) are one-person shops. This result does not mean, however, that this finding should be minimized. The survey results identified nine primary duty PAO respondents at the field level; however, individual responses to the value question showed no field level primary duty PAO cases with scores below four. In contrast, of the 44 field level collateral duty PAO respondents (PAO or command cadre), 11 cases, or 25%, showed scores below four. This finding provides support for the conclusion that commands with primary duty

PAOs receive more value from the public affairs function relative to other typical divisions at the unit than commands with collateral duty PAOs.

Primary duty PAOs and their command cadre are also more satisfied with their public affairs programs than collateral duty PAOs and their command cadre. Results for the satisfaction measure showed mean scores for the combined primary duty PAO group nearly one standard deviation above the average value of four. In contrast, combined collateral duty PAO group scores were only slightly above the average score of four. Looking at the individual scores, three out of 25 respondents or 12% of the combined primary duty PAO group, had scores at or below three. Ten out of 44 combined collateral duty PAO respondents, or 23%, provided scores at or below three. On the other end of the scale, 11 of 25 respondents, or 44% of the combined primary duty PAO group had scores of six or seven. In contrast, combined collateral duty PAO scores showed 12 out of the 44 respondents, or 27%, with values of six or seven.

When respondents were asked whether the public affairs division made a contribution to the strategic planning function of their unit, mean scores for both the combined primary duty PAO group and combined collateral duty PAO group showed average or below average contributions. Although the combined primary duty PAO group had significantly higher scores on this measure than the combined collateral duty PAO group, average scores for both groups were relatively low. In R1, it was determined that primary duty PAOs (does not include command cadre input) engage in more formal research activities than their collateral duty counterparts, however, mean scores for the formal research measure were also low for both groups. Since public affairs strategic planning involves both formal and informal research, this finding supports the need for increased formal public affairs research training.

Opportunities to increase formal research training will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section of this study.

The support measure did not show significant differences, indicating that PAOs and command cadre both show above average support for the public affairs program regardless of whether the PAO is primary duty or collateral duty. This is an important finding because it provides evidence that the public affairs function is supported at both the primary duty and collateral duty levels. Closing the gap between primary duty and collateral duty PAOs in areas where statistically significant differences between the groups were discovered, and increasing the capabilities of PAOs at all levels in low scoring areas will only increase the support given to the public affairs function.

In summary, the following areas were discovered with statistically significant differences between the primary duty PAO and collateral duty PAO groups:

1. EXPERIENCE – Primary duty PAOs had, on average, significantly more experience performing Coast Guard-related public affairs activities than their collateral duty counterparts. Additionally, command cadre perceived primary duty PAOs to have more experience than collateral duty PAOs. This finding supports differences in years of public affairs experience between the two groups. Primary duty PAOs had, on average, 11.69 years of public affairs experience. Collateral duty PAOs had, on average, 1.29 years of public affairs experience.
2. MANAGER ROLE – Primary duty PAOs performed the public affairs manager roles, both overall and within each of the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving facilitator constructs, significantly more frequently than their

- collateral duty counterparts. Command cadre perceived primary duty PAOs to perform the public affairs manager roles, both overall and within the communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator constructs, significantly more frequently than collateral duty PAOs. Command cadre did not perceive primary duty PAOs to perform the manager role of expert prescriber significantly more frequently than collateral duty PAOs, although means scores were higher for the primary duty group.
3. FORMAL RESEARCH – Primary duty PAOs engaged in significantly more formal research activities than their collateral duty counterparts, although mean scores for both groups were low.
 4. ACCESS TO THE DOMINANT COALITION – Command cadre perceived primary duty PAOs to have more access to the dominant coalition than collateral duty PAOs. According to command cadre, primary duty PAOs were more likely to be involved in managing the unit’s communication response to issues involving commercial interests, media representatives, community leaders, activist groups, and maritime partners than collateral duty PAOs. Public affairs-related information provided by primary duty PAOs was also more likely to be an important part of the command cadre decision-making process than public affairs information provided by collateral duty PAOs. With regard to the PAO survey, there was a 91.9% probability that the same measures were significantly different between the two groups; however, PAO survey results were not statistically significant using a 95% alpha level.
 5. QUALITY MEASURES (Satisfaction, Value, and Strategic Planning Contribution) – Primary duty PAOs and their command cadre were significantly more satisfied with the public affairs function than collateral duty PAOs and their command cadre. They

also valued the public affairs function significantly more and received a significantly greater strategic planning contribution than collateral duty PAOs and their command cadre.

Areas that did not show significant differences between primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs included:

1. TECHNICIAN ROLE – Both primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs showed a similar likelihood to perform technician-related activities such as writing press releases and conducting media interviews. Command cadre perceived both groups to be similar in likelihood to enact this role.
2. INFORMAL RESEARCH – Both primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs were nearly equal in their likelihood to engage in representational boundary spanning activities. Command cadre perceived both groups to be nearly equal in likelihood to engage in informal research.
3. QUALITY MEASURES (Support) – Both the combined primary duty PAO group and the combined collateral duty PAO group showed similar support levels for the public affairs function.

Areas that used percentile measurements included:

1. EDUCATION – Both primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs were highly educated with more than 80% of respondents indicating at least a bachelor's degree. Approximately 15% of PAOs have advanced degrees in a mass communication field.
2. TRAINING – Although formal training curricula have been incorporated into the Coast Guard training program, nearly 40% of PAOs who responded have not received

any formal public affairs training, and more than 50% of command cadre respondents have not received any formal public affairs training.

3. MODELS OF COMMUNICATION – PAOs and command cadre showed similar attitudes toward the four models of communication. Respondents disagreed with the press agency model, agreed with the public information model, and used both two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models of communication dependent upon the situation.
4. AUTONOMY – Both primary duty PAOs and collateral duty PAOs had a level of autonomy consistent with what would normally be expected for junior officers primarily at the Lieutenant Junior Grade to Lieutenant rank. Consistent with HRO principles, in crisis communication situations, PAO autonomy increased as experience increased.
5. SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND FEEDBACK PROCESSES (Hotwashes) – Both groups reported predominately low involvement in unit hotwashes. The primary duty PAO group showed modestly higher percentages of respondents indicating medium-to-high involvement in unit hotwashes.

R3 involved a multiple regression procedure to determine which characteristics explained the most variation in shared expectation scores between PAOs and command cadre. The three variables involved in the analysis were the technician role (TECHNICIAN), the manager role (MANAGER), and public affairs experience (EXPERIENCE). Moderate-to- high correlations were discovered between the technician role and manager role, as well as the manager role and public affairs experience. The most parsimonious model included only one variable, the manager role. This variable

accounted for 48.8% of the variation in shared expectation scores. This finding suggests that PAOs who practice the manager role are more likely to create shared understanding with senior leadership about what public affairs should do for the organization, and how the PAO can provide those services. The finding also showed that knowledge to enact the technician role and public affairs experience are necessary precursors to playing the public affairs manager role in the Coast Guard.

Chapter V discusses these findings and provides recommendations regarding how the Coast Guard can capitalize on this research to improve the public affairs program at all levels of the organization.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

The final chapter of this thesis is organized into three sections. The first section discusses the findings and their relevancy to the Coast Guard public affairs program structure and makes recommendations based on those findings. The second section identifies opportunities for further research on the topic and the final section concludes the research.

Comparing and contrasting two types of Coast Guard PAOs, primary duty and collateral duty, was not meant to simply show that primary duty PAOs provide superior public affairs services to the organization. The researcher believed that primary duty PAOs would likely score much higher on many categories because, on average, they had significantly more public affairs experience and expertise than their collateral duty counterparts, and, to a certain extent, more public affairs training and education. It is a tribute to the initiative, dedication, and professionalism of the organization's collateral duty PAOs that they scored so well on many of the measures given their experience and training level. Knowing that one group would likely score higher on many categories, however, does not mean that this study was comparing apples to oranges. Both groups filled public affairs positions at major or medium ashore commands. Both groups had varying levels of public affairs experience and training. Both groups worked at units with different operational tempos, different mission focus, different geographical responsibility, different span of

control, and different public affairs complexities. Both groups were mainly comprised of junior officers in the O-2 to O-3 paygrade range.

The intent of this study was to determine, as best as possible given the limitations of social science survey research, whether the primary duty PAO group, on average, provided superior public affairs services, because by doing so the researcher could determine where the differences were and make inferences as to why primary duty PAOs delivered those results. Based on the findings, it seems that the main reason why the Coast Guard's primary duty PAOs provided superior public affairs services was because they used their experience and training to enact the manager role more frequently than their collateral duty counterparts. In this role, primary duty PAOs found out how stakeholders in their AOR felt about issues and they worked with command cadre to develop solutions to communication problems, leading to increased shared understanding about the public relations function at the unit and a more strategically focused, valued, and satisfying public affairs program.

Coast Guard public affairs is an individual command responsibility (U.S. Coast Guard, 2003). This statement likely was intended by program leaders to highlight the importance of public affairs at the unit level to both the overall goal of raising visibility of the service to the American people, and to other Coast Guard goals such as recruitment, retention, and mission funding. But it also highlights the uniqueness of Coast Guard activities. Unlike other military services such as the Army, which is structured into corps with 75,000 soldiers, divisions with 25,000 soldiers, brigades with 3,500 soldiers, battalions with 800 soldiers, and companies with 200 soldiers - each with a requisite public affairs staff based on the size of the force (Department of the Army, 1997), the Coast Guard is structured to provide continuous coverage across geographic boundaries. These boundaries are

different in size, operational tempo, and focus. In other words, one size does not fit all in the Coast Guard, nor does it fit all in Coast Guard public affairs. The introduction to this study questioned whether the current Coast Guard public affairs model was sufficient to provide for the full spectrum of public affairs services across the organization, particularly given the new expectations following the transfer of the Coast Guard to the Department of Homeland Security. The research results provide evidence that the answer to this question is, in some respects, no.

The current structure of Coast Guard public affairs places personnel into billets by organizational level rather than the unit public affairs environment. The Area and District staff levels have billeted primary duty PAOs and field units have billeted collateral duty PAOs. Personnel officers do try to place PAOs with more experience and training at the busiest and largest staff units; however, since the Coast Guard transferred to DHS and the Sector construct was implemented, many field units reported that their public affairs duties expanded and became more complex. The responses to open-ended survey questions highlight this finding.

“I think the main impact has been with the Sector organization, since now the PAO at a Sector is responsible for the Prevention and Response sides. Therefore, a much more breadth [sic] of knowledge is required. Plus, more importantly, the time demands are much greater. Not only do we deal with legacy Group information (e.g. SAR media releases), but now get integrated into JICs for Oil Spill Response.” (PAO Survey)

“The amount of external communications now handled at the Sector level is enormous and managing it is not a part time job... Sector PAOs must be on par with partner

agency PAOs within their AOR to ensure coordinated, synchronized public affairs efforts.”
(PAO Survey)

“With Sectorization and our transition to DHS, the Public Affairs Officer is not just a collateral anymore. In order for the Public Affairs program at the Sector level to be successful, there needs to be a dedicated billet to continue a constant outreach in all of our mission areas. In addition, the geographical area that the Sector Commander is responsible for has grown and he/she wears several hats (Captain of the Port, Federal On-Scene Coordinator, Federal Maritime Security Coordinator, Officer In Charge [-] Marine Inspections, Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator). The Public Affairs Officer plays an important role to ensure the Sector is proactive versus reactive and transparent to the public.” (PAO Survey)

Further, some Command Cadre respondents noted that the increased visibility of the Coast Guard and complexity of its operations means that PAOs have greater responsibilities. The evolution may require revisiting the PAO structure.

“First of all, we have moved from a tier 3 to a tier 1 Department and the stakes are higher. Further, we are a key component of the Department and often come through with good news, good reports etc for positive media outreach. Next, our organization has become more complex and it is often confusing to determine where CG responsibilities end. We are evolving into a DHS component in the true sense vs. the Coast Guard which happens [sic] to be placed in this particular Department.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“We are more in the spot light than ever before and as such we have been forced to raise the PAO position to a more senior level. Before, the PAO at most units was a collateral

duty and in many cases still is, but in the past it was always a very junior officer (O-1/2 level) and now we are making it a more senior officer (O-3/4). This is important as the more senior folks bring credibility and technical experience to the job, something our junior officers traditionally can't unless they were prior enlisted.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“There does appear to be more of an emphasis on public affairs at the unit level under the Sector construct. Previously in my career, I had only had collateral duty PA's, with support from the District. It is much better to have a full time PA at the Sector, in fact it is a necessity.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“DHS requires much quicker feedback regarding any hi-vis or critical events that occur necessitating a more detailed and timely information feed up through the chain of command. The sector construct has created commands that have a much larger span of control than MSOs and Groups had. This means that the sector is handling more mission areas, more incidents and covering a greater area than previous operational shore commands. They are almost like mini-districts and need full time PAOs and/or PA POs to handle the importance of promoting the CG w/in each sector AOR.” (Command Cadre Survey)

A common thread throughout these comments is that public affairs is a full-time job at our busiest field units regardless of whether a full-time PAO has or has not been billeted. PAOs and command cadre alike pointed to the increased depth and breadth of public affairs services since the Coast Guard transferred to DHS and implemented the Sector construct. Both the PAO and command cadre survey asked what the PAO position should be at the respondent's unit. Table 32 depicts the response percentages for each category.

Table 32.

Preferred PAO Structure by Organizational Level (in percentages)

	Primary Duty PAO Position	Collateral Duty PAO position	Higher paygrade	Lower paygrade
Staff PAO (9)	78%	22%	67%	0%
Field PAO (31)	71%	29%	4%	8%
Primary Duty PAO command cadre (9)	100%	0%	22%	0%
Collateral duty PAO command cadre (19)	37%	63%	5%	0%

Table 32 supports a conclusion that at the staff level the use of primary duty PAOs is both the appropriate and necessary public affairs structure. However, the high percentage of respondents at the staff level selecting a response indicating that their position should be a higher paygrade may point to a belief that, at least at some Coast Guard staff units, the senior public affairs position should be billeted at a higher level to effectively manage the spectrum of public affairs activities they are engaged in. This finding may also provide evidence that junior officer PAOs are at a disadvantage in the dominant coalition mix because in many cases they are significantly lower in rank than most other members of the coalition.

At our major and medium ashore field units, 71% of respondents indicated that the PAO structure should include a primary duty PAO billet. The command cadre response to this question was much lower with 37% indicating a primary duty PAO should be billeted at the field level. It should be noted, however, that some respondents who selected that the billet should be a collateral duty position commented in the open-ended questions that the PAO should be a primary duty billet, but, given funding constraints and higher priorities, billeting primary duty PAOs was not likely to happen.

The literature stated that one of the most-difficult obstacles in public relations is showing the value of the public relations function to the organization (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Although many executives understand that providing excellent public relations is important to the organization, it is an extremely difficult concept to measure. In both surveys, respondents were asked about the value of the public affairs function relative to other similar divisions at the unit. In the results section it was shown that for units with primary duty PAOs, the value of the public affairs function was 34% above what was considered average value for typical divisions at the unit. For units with collateral duty PAOs, the value of the public affairs function was only slightly above average. This finding lends credence to a statement that billeting primary duty PAOs at the Coast Guard's busiest units provides increased value to the organization and should be a high priority, both in terms of funding and staffing.

Many commands understand the value of public affairs to organizational success, and have decided to position PAOs at the O-3/O-4 level rather than the O-1/O-2 level. This level assignment makes sense because it places the public affairs function in the hands of more-experienced personnel. Although generally considered to be more ideal than using the organization's most-junior officers as PAOs, this practice also introduces unwanted complications into the public affairs mix at the collateral duty level. Consider the following comments provided in the open-ended section of the surveys.

"...when you think of the sheer number of things that could fall under the PAO - community outreach, media relations, Color Guard, Partners in Education, Government Affairs - this is too much for a collateral, especially since the collateral is going to be given to a LT, who at the Sector level may be a Division Chief." (PAO Survey)

“I am a collateral duty PAO with no staff other than a PADET [public affairs detachment] in another state. We are able to handle all media during a major SAR case or large event; however it is the public outreach that suffers b/c I have no time to do this. ...I am an O4 Dept Head who cannot spend my day coord these events ...” (PAO Survey)

“My primary job is the Command Center Chief with supervision of 30 people. Although I enjoy Public Affairs, I would not have chosen this collateral because running a Command Center and committing time to a successful Public Affairs Program would not work out and is not working out. Additionally, I would not recommend this collateral to another Lieutenant either. I believe their primary job will ultimately suffer because the Public Affairs collateral is a full-time job. I recommend that the Public Affairs Officer be a dedicated billet (O-3/O-4) at the Sector Level.” (PAO Survey)

In many collateral duty PAO cases, it seems that primary duty responsibilities are too demanding to devote the time and energy into the public affairs program that it would take to contribute more than basic technician-related services to the unit. The Excellence Study found that solely increasing practitioner’s ability to enact one-way communication such as press agency or public information did not lead to increased communication excellence (Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In these cases, integral problem-solving facilitator and communication facilitator PAO roles may not be enacted and therefore critical public affairs advice based on relevant research and boundary spanning activities are excluded from the command cadre decision-making process. Strategic communication planning is likely developed by command cadre rather than the PAO, resulting in command cadre playing a predominantly professional communicator role vice the PAO. Comments that suggested that this was happening at some of our field units included:

“The PAO is someone who can coordinate PA events and write the occasional press release. PA strategy is developed and executed by the command staff.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“My unit has one collateral duty PAO. His primary duties reduce his role as PAO to an "as available" basis only. Other departments and command cadre perform most of the public affairs duties outlined in this survey out of necessity.” (Command Cadre Survey)

Just as the intent of this study was not to simply show that the Coast Guard’s primary duty PAOs provided superior public affairs services, neither was the intent of this study simply to advocate for realigning the public affairs structure to billet primary duty PAOs at units across the organization. Although, in a normative sense, using primary duty PAOs at all levels of the organization would provide the best opportunity to increase public affairs effectiveness, scarce resources and competing demands dictate that funds and personnel must be aligned with programs that provide the most return on investment. At many levels of the organization, the benefit of using primary duty PAOs would not justify the additional cost necessary to provide for such a scenario. Therefore, an important question is – given scarce resources and competing demands, at what levels of the organization would the benefit of using primary duty PAOs justify the expense?

Survey results provide overwhelming evidence that primary duty PAOs should continue to be positioned at all Area and District staff units. Results also strongly suggest that some Sector PAOs should fill dedicated, primary duty billets. Rather than applying an “all or none” approach to determining if PAO billets should be created for Sectors, the researcher advocates that determinations of which Sectors receive primary duty PAOs be

based on media market, Coast Guard footprint, operational tempo, and quantity and diversity of external stakeholders. Using this approach, primary duty PAOs would be billeted first at Sectors that need them the most. A good starting point might be those Sectors that have already transitioned into a primary duty PAO position at the expense of another billet. This approach would also allow the Coast Guard to establish goals and baselines for incorporation of primary duty PAOs according to a prioritized list that can be modified as necessary to account for training timelines, resource limitations, and future realignments.

Based on data obtained in this study, the researcher believes that other Coast Guard field units including MSSTs, Air Stations, and Training Commands are adequately served by a collateral duty PAO, at least in the current operating environment. Although the focus of this research was not on the role of the PA specialist, there were indications that these units, and Air Stations in particular, would be well-served by having greater access to PA specialists, either in the form of dedicated PAs assigned to the unit, or collocated PADETS.

It was determined in the results section that enacting the manager role explained 48.8% of the variation in shared expectation scores between PAOs and command cadre. This percentage, however, included 16% of explained variation that was also common to the technician role and experience. Results indicated that the knowledge to provide technician-oriented services and public affairs experience were necessary precursors to enacting the manager role. Enacting the manager role was the largest unique contributor to creating shared expectations between the PAO and command cadre in this study, and a major indicator of communication excellence in the Excellence Study (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Based on that finding, the following recommendations provide the Coast Guard options that, in the long-term, could increase the

ability of primary duty PAOs to enact the manager role at both the staff level and designated field levels.

Option 1: Create an External Affairs Limited Duty Officer (LDO) Specialty

If the Coast Guard were to create a communication officer career path, the development of an external affairs, rather than public affairs, LDO specialty is the preference of the researcher because it provides opportunities for practitioners to contribute to the organization in two complementary capacities, public affairs and governmental affairs. This option provides the most long-term opportunity to increase PAO effectiveness throughout the organization and provides significant growth potential as communication duties expand. Similar to the career path offered to Coast Guard legal officers, an External Affairs LDO specialty would provide substantial benefit to the organization. A professional, career-oriented path for interested officers would contribute to the experience, expertise, quality, and retention of qualified officers in the public affairs and governmental affairs arena. As the Coast Guard transitions to an external affairs structure in alignment with DHS and other partner agencies, the need for highly experienced external affairs officers will only grow.

Creating an External Affairs LDO specialty will also help ensure that the Coast Guard is able to effectively position itself as a dominant external affairs player in DHS during an Incident of National Significance (INS) or other event necessitating a Joint Information Center (JIC) stand-up (Department of Homeland Security, 2004). Under the current structure, it is likely that in any major event, public affairs officers and governmental affairs officers would be required to surge to the affected area to effectively handle the level of communication demands required for the situation. Creating an officer specialty with

balanced governmental affairs and public affairs personnel levels at the junior, midgrade, and senior officer ranks and by both organizational level and geographic location will help ensure the Coast Guard is prepared to effectively manage both current and future responsibilities outlined in the National Response Plan (NRP).

It is also the belief of the researcher that PAO role ambiguity, especially at the field level, would be reduced with the creation of an External Affairs LDO specialty. As shown in the results section, the primary duty PAO and collateral duty PAO variances for the manager role construct were nearly identical at the PAO level. For command cadre, however, the variance on the manager role construct at the collateral duty PAO level was much larger than the variance at the primary duty PAO level. This result may indicate significant role ambiguity at Coast Guard field units with regard to the PAO role. An External Affairs LDO specialty may decrease this ambiguity throughout the organization because a necessary function of creating a specialty is to clearly define the expectations and responsibilities of the profession. As practitioners gain experience and legitimacy in their positions, they may begin to enact the manager role to greater degrees leading to increased shared expectations with command cadre and less role ambiguity. Figure 5 depicts potential billet opportunities for officers in the External Affairs LDO specialty.

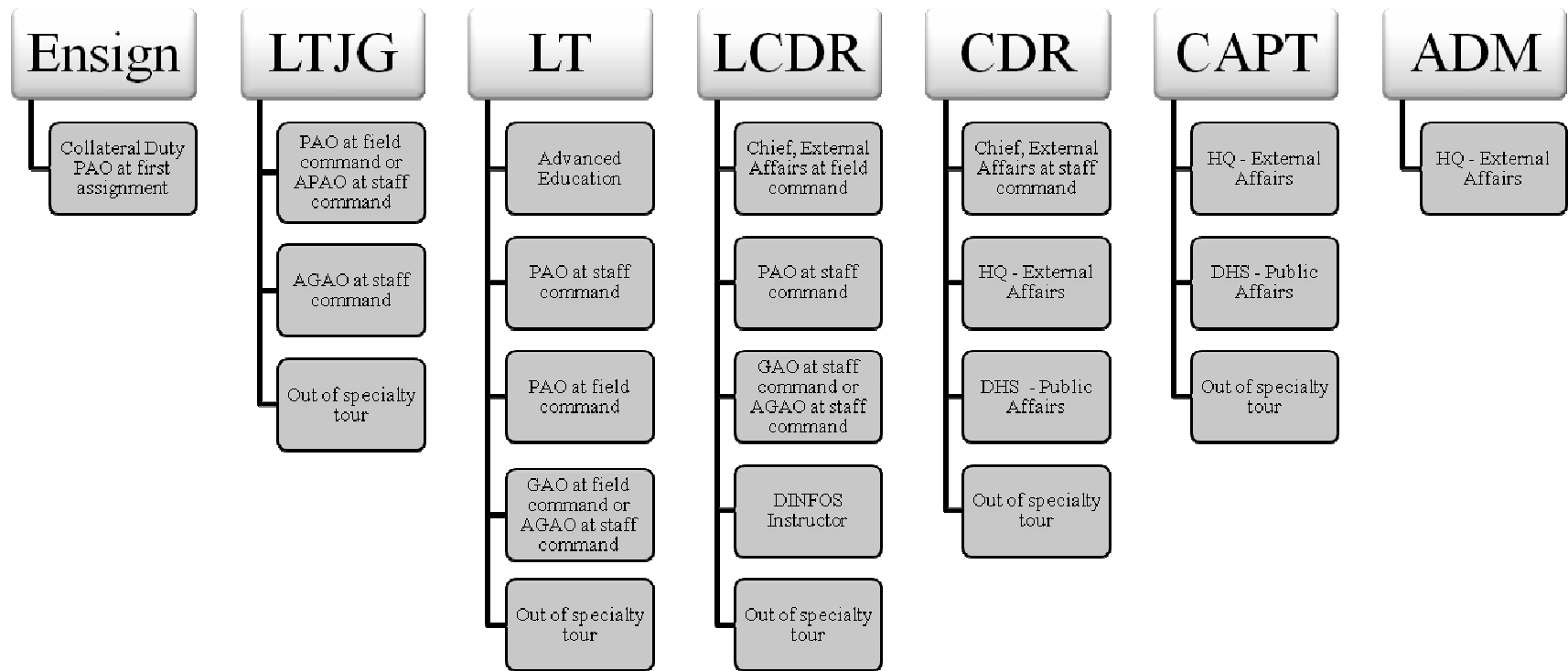


Figure 5: Sample Billet Assignments for External Affairs LDO Specialty

The development of an External Affairs LDO specialty would likely necessitate a comprehensive Personnel Qualification Standard (PQS) for both the public affairs and governmental affairs components. Upon completion of each PQS, along with requisite knowledge and experience factors, individuals could then be designated as PAOs or GAOs. Upon successful completion of both PQSs and requisite knowledge and experience factors, individuals could move into department head positions as Chief, External Affairs at the O-4 through O-7 levels. The development of standardized competencies for PAOs and GAOs may be beneficial to the Coast Guard because it may help to balance the training and experience base of individuals filling PAO and GAO roles at both the field and staff levels. It may also help to decrease role ambiguity between PAOs, GAOs, and command cadre throughout the Coast Guard.

There are also several disadvantages to creating an External Affairs LDO specialty. First, it would be costly to create this specialty. The initial cost in identifying and obtaining additional personnel, training, and support mechanisms would require a considerable investment into the program. Long-term costs include providing advanced training, as well as costs associated with creating billets at higher paygrades and providing support personnel. Officers may also be reluctant to join a new specialty without a proven advancement record. Committing to a new specialty would require officers, to a certain extent, to forego operational careers. Although providing opportunities for external affairs officers to take assignments out of specialty would only benefit the External Affairs LDO specialty, that decision is usually predicated by the current operating environment and would not likely be assured. The civilian public relations profession would also likely affect the ability of the Coast Guard to acquire and retain qualified officers. If officers do not feel they would be

able to utilize their professional expertise in the civilian world, it may decrease the pool of potential officers interested in the program. Conversely, if officers find too many opportunities in the civilian profession, they may be more likely to leave the service to pursue other opportunities.

Option 2: Increase Formal Education Opportunities

The researcher believes an option to increase formal education is inferior to option 1, but still presents a viable opportunity for the Coast Guard to increase the knowledge needed for PAOs to enact the manager role. One reason why this option is less desirable than option 1 is because it focuses on education rather than experience. Experience contributed significantly more to public relations excellence in the Excellence Study than formal education (Dozier, 1992). Increasing formal education, however, may indirectly help practitioners gain public affairs experience because they may be more likely to pursue public affairs opportunities further into their careers if they feel their education would benefit them as they achieve seniority in the organization.

The Coast Guard currently reserves two postgraduate tabs for Coast Guard officers to attend advanced training in a public relations or related discipline through the Duty Under Instruction (DUINS) program. The current funding cap is approximately \$20,000 per student over an 18-month program. Many universities, however, allow military personnel to attend advanced training at the in-state tuition rate through a military tuition benefit, or equivalent program. Because the Coast Guard requires degree completion within 18 months, in some cases the funding cap is not exhausted. The Coast Guard has also invested in a partnership with a major university program meeting Coast Guard requirements in terms of quality,

length, cost, and educational focus. By expanding that partnership to two or three schools and providing for one additional postgraduate tab per year, the influx of Coast Guard public affairs DUINS graduates may provide more public affairs value at the staff level across the organization. For instance, using a baseline that includes a preference for PAOs with advanced degrees at the Staff level, in order to fill at least nine of 11 staff PAO billets with individuals who have received advanced degrees (one staff unit has a civilian PAO) at the completion of normal rotation cycles, the Coast Guard would need to provide three postgraduate tabs per year vice two. This does not include accommodations for officers electing to defer public affairs postgraduate opportunities in order to take a Commanding Officer or Executive Officer assignment. It also assumes that the public affairs program will utilize officers with significant prior experience, either as former PAs, or through the Coast Guard's enlisted advanced education program, in staff positions as much as possible.

Under the current public affairs program, in any given year, the number of DUINS graduates relative to open PAO positions means that some staff positions will inevitably be filled with PAOs lacking significant public affairs education, training, and experience. This may be reflected in the large variation in scores at the primary duty PAO level on the EXPERIENCE, MANAGER, and RESEARCH variables in this study. Expanding the number of postgraduate tabs from two to three would significantly advance efforts to achieve a more-balanced PAO program at the staff level in the near-future and long-term.

Expanding the number of postgraduate opportunities in public affairs also has some significant disadvantages. Unless the overall budget for the Coast Guard's advanced education programs could be increased, other programs may need to be downsized in order to expand the public affairs program. This budget revision could create imbalances in other

important mission areas. Additionally, the number of staff billets that become available every year fluctuates. There is a possibility that by increasing the number of postgraduate tabs from two to three, there will be years in which there are more DUINS graduates than available billets at the staff level. This glut could lead to under-utilization of PAOs into billets not requiring specialized public affairs knowledge; however, they could be utilized at field level PAO positions. This option also introduces an additional cost into the public affairs program. One final, but nonetheless important consequence of providing additional postgraduate opportunities is that some officers with significant public affairs experience may be denied opportunities to utilize that experience because they are unable to compete for postgraduate opportunities based on admission standards. If there are as many postgraduate candidates as open positions, individuals with significant experience but no advanced degree may miss out on opportunities to contribute to the program.

Option 2 focuses on the staff level, but in order to achieve a good public affairs balance throughout the organization, education opportunities must also include personnel filling public affairs billets at the field level. The Coast Guard Academy offers bachelor's degrees in management and government, among other disciplines; however, mass communication courses are not currently offered. Integrating a set of mass communication courses into the required and elective Academy curricula would help officers understand the public affairs function better and allow them to incorporate a basic set of skills into their primary duty or collateral duty PAO positions without the need for significant additional training. This knowledge base would also provide a significant benefit to officers as they achieve seniority in rank and become command cadre members, and may help PAOs and command cadre develop increased shared expectations about the public affairs function.

Recommended courses might include a basic public relations writing course, a public relations theory course, and a strategic communication course. Additional courses could be implemented in the future if the courses are successful and demand grows.

Disadvantages to incorporating mass communication courses into the Academy curricula include the cost associated with hiring qualified professors. Additionally, incorporating mass communication courses at the Academy does not provide the education to officers who join the Coast Guard from other accession programs, including Officer Candidate School and the Direct Commission Program. Integrating a required mass communication course would also necessitate dropping another required course from the Academy program, which may hinder opportunities to gain proficiency in other mission areas.

Based on responses to the open-ended questions, it appears that primary duty PAOs were considered in the original Sector construct, but the positions were not funded or filled. This research provides quantitative evidence showing the value of public affairs to the organization and the necessity of billeting primary duty PAOs at our busiest field units. It also discusses both the advantages and disadvantages of creating a new External Affairs LDO career path and expanding postgraduate opportunities for officers. To provide opportunities to increase public affairs knowledge at the field level without requiring significant advanced training, this research discusses opportunities to establish mass communication courses at the Academy. Understanding, however, that competing demands and funding constraints may preclude the incorporation of these recommendations, it is important to also provide recommendations that focus on maximizing public affairs

effectiveness in the current environment without significant additional cost or degradation of other programs.

Option 3: Mandate Public Affairs Training

Nearly 40% of PAOs and more than 50% of command cadre members indicated they had not received any type of formal, dedicated public affairs training. DINFOS offers two classes to the Coast Guard that focus on military public affairs. The first course, PAOQC, is an eight-week course offered to officers billeted at staff PAO positions. The second course, CGPAC, is a five-day course offered to officers in collateral duty PAO positions. Although neither course offers training in strategic communication or formal research procedures, both courses provide the necessary training to effectively write press releases, conduct media interviews, assemble press conferences, and other technician-related activities. The following open-ended response provides insight into the importance of these courses to Coast Guard PAOs.

“This is the second time in my career that I have been designated a collateral duty PAO. I have received exactly zero formal training. If it were not for the district PA detachment, I would be completely lost and there would be very little PA coverage in our AOR. I was stationed on a cutter and the same applied there with the exception of the PA detachment...there wasn't one. I was left alone to draft press releases with no idea how to create one, or how to get it out to the public. If the CG wants to have PAO's at each unit, which I think it is a great idea, there needs to be more training available and unit's[sic] need to ensure that the people they assign as PAO's have received or will receive that training shortly after taking over that responsibility.” (PAO Survey)

Certainly this is an extreme case and does not reflect the majority of PAOs who have received prompt PAO training. It does, however, illustrate a problem associated with relying on the unit to allow personnel to attend training. As the survey results showed, command cadre have differing views regarding the value of public affairs to the unit. In the case of collateral duty PAOs, commands that do not view the public affairs function as important are less likely to allow the PAO time away from their primary duty to attend training for a collateral duty. Missed training opportunities inevitably put some PAOs at a substantial disadvantage in providing timely, adaptive public affairs services to the American public and degrade the overall effectiveness of the Coast Guard public affairs program. To the extent practicable, it would benefit the public affairs program to integrate public affairs training into an officer's pipeline training. Pipeline training is a term for mandatory training that both enlisted and officer personnel receive before reporting to a new unit. Given the unpredictability of Coast Guard operations and potential for major events to occur at any time, in all cases it may benefit the Coast Guard to provide PAOs DINFOS training as soon as possible.

In addition to DINFOS training, PAOs and command cadre were asked what types of other training would be beneficial to the public affairs program. Over 60% of respondents in both surveys stated that crisis communication training would be beneficial to the program. Other training areas that were selected frequently included developing strategic messages, communicating effectively with external groups, and media relations training. Areas that were selected infrequently included public opinion polling and research and media analysis and measurement. The researcher believes that along with the top four selections, the two

latter areas would be highly beneficial to Coast Guard PAOs since they both help PAOs develop specialized research skills that enhance strategic communication planning.

The final recommendation discussed in this study relates to the length of PAO assignments at field units. Many collateral duty PAOs and some primary duty PAOs are rotated out of the PAO assignment after one year or before their tour of duty is complete. Although this may increase the number of officers that are exposed to Coast Guard public affairs, it is likely a hindrance to enactment of the manager role because officers do not gain the experience necessary to provide significant contributions beyond basic technician related services. Additionally, rotating PAOs frequently creates a barrier to the development of critical public affairs relationships. Significant turnover in the PAO position may result in PAOs filling a “point of contact” role for the unit rather than contributing to the boundary spanning function at the unit. PAOs with good public affairs relationships may use their relationships with stakeholders to evolve from predominantly technician roles into communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator manager roles, thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of the public affairs function at the unit.

Future Research

Many studies have used the Excellence Theory to dissect public relations processes in the civilian world. Few, however, have applied this research stream to government agencies. This research, at the very least, provides evidence that the public relations best practices identified in the Excellence Study are important to providing excellent public affairs services in the Coast Guard as well. These practices may translate successfully to the Coast Guard because of its regulatory function, significant presence in both large cities and small coastal

communities, and extensive interaction with the American public at the local level. It may be beneficial to conduct further research to determine if similar results would be obtained in studies focused on DHS partners such as FEMA and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Such research could provide insight into similarities and differences between communication processes at agencies within the same department and may help agencies learn how they can interact and partner together more effectively.

Further study on the integration of HRO concepts into the public relations profession may also be beneficial to public relations scholars. This study found support for the proposition that in crisis communication situations autonomy increases as experience and expertise increase, regardless of rank. Another HRO concept, the use of continuous rehearsal and assessment processes, showed varying levels of incorporation into the public affairs environment in this study. For Coast Guard operational units, which rely on HRO strategies during tactical operations to ensure the safety and security of the American public and their own highly trained work force, the integration of HRO principles, such as systematic review and feedback processes, are mandatory in certain situations and have shown their value on countless occasions. This research did not show high levels of systematic review and feedback incorporation within the Coast Guard public affairs, however. It seems intuitive that Coast Guard public affairs would benefit from increased participation in these processes because they capture and integrate lessons learned into program mandates. Additional research might explore non-governmental industries and businesses that have been involved in multiple crisis communication situations to determine if, and to what extent, HRO principles were integrated into public relations processes. Agricultural producers, toy

manufacturers, and the tourism industry, for example, may provide current opportunities for expanded research.

This research focused exclusively on Coast Guard PAOs; however, PA specialists are responsible for the lion's share of public affairs activities that raise awareness of the Coast Guard to the public. Chartering a working group may be beneficial to determine whether expanding the PA program is justified. The PA force is a small, but highly effective group of dedicated technicians, and there may be considerable debate within the Coast Guard regarding how they can be most effectively positioned, both geographically and by organizational level, to maximize their potential. Although the researcher did not specifically ask survey questions related to the PA specialty, several respondents provided insight that could be used as a starting point for future research. The following comments obtained from the open-ended responses illustrate these opportunities:

"I would shift most enlisted PA billets from District and Area PALs to Sectors, retain senior PA specialists at District/Area for program management, surge capacity, and field unit training." (PAO Survey)

"We currently have 3 pilots working in the Public Affairs Division. I would gladly trade 1 pilot for an enlisted Public Affairs Specialist." (PAO Survey)

"The Coast Guard should strongly consider the deployment of full-time PA billets to air stations. A great percentage of video and still imagery used by the media is taken from CG aircraft. A full-time PA3 or PA2 assigned to each air station could maximize the effectiveness and timeliness of that imagery as well as perform other Public Affairs duties." (Command Cadre Survey)

“...the PA Detachment from (name withheld) is located nearby at (name withheld)... [T]hey do most of the daily PA work for the Sector, but don't work for the Sector.... The disconnect between the PA Detachment and Sector is not good and the PA Detachment should work for the Sector Command, thereby spending their time doing what the Sector Commander thinks is important.” (Command Cadre Survey)

“PA DET organization needs to be revamped, too often Sectors believe they own the PA det. Need staffed functionally, video desk, imagery desk as well as Command Center response also need to have a deployed capability iso External affairs esf 15.” (PAO Survey)

Specific research topics might include an analysis to determine whether PADETs can be more effectively utilized by collocating at Air Stations or Sector commands, or if they should be located at a stand-alone facility in a central location similar to recruitment offices. Analysis might also include an assessment of whether PADETs are more effectively utilized as District/Area units, or if they should report to the Sector Commander or Air Station Commanding Officer.

A second opportunity for further research within the Coast Guard public affairs program concerns the development of External Affairs divisions vice Public Affairs divisions. Consider the following statements received in the open-ended comment sections of the survey:

“The External Affairs concept is a positive one, but requires a seasoned PAO or person with governmental affairs to make it work. In addition, this person needs seniority to be invited to the table. I'd recommend either a full-time governmental affairs person, possibly civilian, working for an O-4 External Affairs Officer who oversees all communication efforts.

Continue to have an E-7 as Asst. PAO who manages the office, trains the junior PAs and generally manages media relations.” (PAO Survey)

“Under the "External Affairs" construct the Governmental Affairs officer needs more support. An assigned JO [Junior Officer] or YN [Yeoman] would be appropriate.”

(Command Cadre Survey)

“It would be nice to have a PAO not doubled-hatted as the External Affairs Branch Chief....” (Command Cadre Survey)

“I would discontinue this push to have an external affairs officer at this or any level until a more comprehensive program had been designed.” (Command Cadre Survey)

It is apparent that respondents had opinions both in favor and opposed to the creation of External Affairs divisions where Public Affairs divisions were previously in place. Developing a comprehensive impact assessment may be an appropriate step to determine the effects of consolidating governmental affairs and public affairs under one umbrella. This assessment may also address the potential need to augment or reposition staff to effectively overcome increased staff workloads and resulting gaps in the Coast Guard’s public affairs posture.

Conclusion

This research focused on characteristics identified in the Excellence Study as major contributors to the excellent public relations programs found within some organizations. It was in no way intended to cover the entire spectrum of characteristics that enable some Coast Guard PAOs to perform at superior levels. It does, however, provide solid evidence that

PAOs are performing both technician and manager roles, and that those PAOs who have broadened their concept of public affairs to enact the manager role, on average, have increased shared expectations with command cadre about what public affairs should and can do for the unit, leading to more-effective public affairs programs.

Data obtained in this study also show the public affairs experience divide that exists between PAOs at the staff level and field level. In the four-plus years since the Coast Guard transitioned into DHS, public affairs duties have expanded significantly at many field units. The National Response Plan (NRP) directs the establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC) during an Incident of National Significance (INS) or other major event, and PAOs at the field level may play an important role in increasing the overall quality of the public affairs response. Although the current public affairs structure allows experienced PAOs to rapidly ramp-up to an affected area, the global information environment demands that PAOs at the field level also have the experience, education, and training to quickly assume lead or support roles in the initial multi-agency public affairs response and to maintain a high level of public affairs presence throughout the incident.

Creating a long-term solution to balance the experience, training, and education levels between PAOs should include consideration of an External Affairs career field in which PAOs can gain public affairs and governmental affairs experience early in their careers and expand their proficiency as they achieve seniority and assume roles of increased responsibility in the organization. New and evolving information technology continues to open avenues for PAOs to educate the American public and the world about Coast Guard activities. It also provides more opportunities for citizens, activist groups, and political interests to find a stage to voice their views. To earn a seat at the decision-making table,

PAOs must understand the cultural and political environment that surrounds them, discern how Coast Guard decisions will likely affect that environment, and provide command cadre with sound public affairs counsel based on solid research and established stakeholder relationships. Anything less and PAOs will continue to be absent from the table when they are needed the most.

APPENDIX I

Public Affairs Officer Survey

Introduction to the Study:

As a U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Officer, either primary duty or collateral duty, you are invited to participate in a study designed to provide insight into the current state of the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program and, if necessary, make recommendations to improve program structure. Lieutenant Matthew J. Moorlag, USCG, is conducting this study as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to identify roles that PAOs perform in practice, skills that help PAOs succeed in the performance of their duties, and professional expectations from both the PAO and command staff perspective. This study includes a survey form that asks questions about PAO roles, training and education, professional expectations, communication methods, and billet structure. The results of this study may provide useful information for the Public Affairs program manager and other U.S. Coast Guard leaders responsible for the future direction of the program.

What will happen during the study?

As a U.S. Coast Guard member currently performing PAO duties, you will be asked to answer a survey by selecting the appropriate response to each question in a series of 27 questions. Additionally, there are three open-ended questions at the end of the survey that ask you to provide additional information not previously covered. The survey should require no more than 20 minutes of your time to complete and your responses will be gathered electronically. If you have questions about the survey or any difficulty accessing it, please contact Matthew Moorlag at (919) 379-3887-home or (602) 510-5927-mobile.

Your privacy is important:

Every effort will be made to protect your privacy. Your name will not be used in any of the information obtained from this study or any of the research reports. No information will be attributed to any individual participant and your responses will not be correlated with the responses of your Executive Officer (or equivalent). Results of each question will be compiled electronically by the Web survey program, and only the principal investigator, Matthew Moorlag, and the thesis advisor, Lois A. Boynton, Ph.D., have access to these data.

Risks and discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from your participation in this research.

Your rights:

It is your decision whether or not you want to participate in this study. You will not be treated any differently if you choose not to be in the study. If you decide to participate in the

study, you have the right to skip any specific questions you choose not to answer for any reason, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Institutional Review Board approval:

The Behavioral Institution Review Board (Behavioral – IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Behavioral – IRB at (919) 966-3113 or by e-mail at IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

By clicking the next button below, you authorize consent to participate in this study. Thank you for your participation and your dedication to the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program.

1. Please indicate your current public affairs position

- Primary duty PAO at District/Area Command
- Primary duty PAO at Sector/Group, Air Station, MSST, DOG, or other Command
- Collateral duty PAO at Sector/Group, Air Station, MSST, DOG, or other Command
- Not currently in a PAO position
- Other (please specify)

2. Please indicate your current paygrade

- O5 or above
- O3/O4
- O1/O2
- CWO (any)
- E8/E9
- E6/E7
- E5 or below
- Civilian
- Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate how long you have been at your current assignment

- Less than 6 months
- More than 6 months and less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or longer

4. How many years of public affairs experience do you have? _____

5. What is your highest level of education completed?

- Doctoral degree
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- High school diploma or GED
- Other (please specify)

6. If you have completed formal education above the high school/GED level, is/are your degree(s) in a Journalism and Mass Communication, Public Relations, Advertising, Communication, or related field?

- Yes, two or more degrees are in a Journalism or related field
- Yes, one degree is in a Journalism or related field
- No, I do not have a degree in a Journalism or related field
- N/A

7. What other formal public affairs training have you completed (please select all that apply)?

- DINFOS PAOQC (8 week course)
- DINFOS CGPAC (5 day course)
- Other DINFOS course
- PA "A" school
- I have not completed formal public affairs training
- Other (please specify)

8. If you could receive additional public affairs training, which of the following areas do you feel would be beneficial (please select all that apply)?

- Media relations
- Joint public affairs
- Crisis communications
- Public opinion polling and research
- Developing strategic messages
- Communicating effectively with external groups
- Media analysis and measurement
- Public speaking
- Other (please specify)

9. Think about public affairs activities that you focus on in your current position and if those activities are important to your success as a PAO at your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "not important" for my position, and 7 means "extremely important" for my position, please evaluate the following public affairs activities:

Not Important (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely Important

- _____ Writing press releases and feature articles
- _____ Shooting/editing video or still photography
- _____ Serving as a public affairs representative during an advancement ceremony or other internal event
- _____ Producing audio/visual for public affairs' online/print publications
- _____ Coordinating media interviews and press conferences
- _____ Managing the unit's response to public affairs issues
- _____ Using research to segment publics and evaluate campaigns

- _____ Briefing command cadre on Coast Guard or other media coverage
- _____ Developing goals and objectives for your division
- _____ Developing strategies for solving public affairs and communication problems

10. The following question concerns your confidence in your overall ability to conduct various public affairs activities. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning “completely confident,” and 7 meaning “not confident,” please rate the following:

Completely Confident (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Not Confident

- _____ Your ability to write press releases
- _____ Your ability to develop and implement a strategic public affairs plan for your unit
- _____ Your ability to conduct interviews and other media relations activities
- _____ Your ability to conduct formal research on public affairs issues relevant to your unit
- _____ Your ability to conduct informal research on public affairs issues relevant to your unit
- _____ Your ability to effectively communicate with outside organizations about Coast Guard issues

11. The following question concerns your public affairs experience. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning “no experience,” and 7 meaning “significant experience,” please rate how much experience you have in the following areas by selecting the appropriate answer.

No Experience (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Significant Experience

- _____ Developing strategic messages about Homeland Security initiatives
- _____ Discussing a search and rescue case with the media
- _____ Preparing an assessment of the external public affairs environment in your community
- _____ Explaining the Coast Guard’s position on an issue to an activist group or citizen group
- _____ Evaluating the success of a public affairs campaign

12. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning “completely disagree,” and 7 meaning “completely agree,” please describe your agreement with each of the following approaches to public affairs:

Completely Disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Agree

- _____ Public affairs should release only favorable information about Coast Guard activities that generates positive coverage of the Coast Guard.
- _____ Public affairs’ main responsibility is to educate the American public about Coast Guard activities, both positive and negative.
- _____ When introducing controversial issues to a public, the public affairs officer and command cadre develop strategic messages to persuade publics to accept the Coast Guard’s position.

_____ When introducing controversial issues to a public, the public affairs officer and command cadre seek to manage conflict with opposition groups to find the best solution to a problem, even if it means altering Coast Guard plans.

_____ The public affairs officer and command cadre should not attempt to manage conflict with external groups once a policy decision has been made.

13. How likely is it that you will seek input from each of the following *before* introducing a relevant initiative to the public?

Very Likely (1) | Likely (2) | May or May Not (3) | Unlikely (4) | Very Unlikely (5)

- _____ Maritime partners
- _____ Community leaders
- _____ Activist groups in your area of responsibility
- _____ Commercial interest

14. How likely is it that you will be involved in managing the unit’s communication response to a policy issue involving each of the following?

Very Likely (1) | Likely (2) | May or May Not (3) | Unlikely (4) | Very Unlikely (5)

- _____ Commercial interest
- _____ Media representative
- _____ Community leaders
- _____ Activist Group
- _____ Maritime partners

15. How likely is it that a member of the command cadre will ask for the public affairs officer’s input on the following?

Very Likely (1) | Likely (2) | May or May Not (3) | Unlikely (4) | Very Unlikely (5)

- _____ Dealing with the media
- _____ Dealing with an activist group
- _____ Understanding opposing viewpoints
- _____ Developing public affairs strategies
- _____ Dealing with negative media coverage

16. How often is the public affairs component involved in unit “hotwashes” or other systematic review and feedback processes?

- Always
- Almost always
- About 75 percent of the time
- About 50 percent of the time
- About 25 percent of the time
- Rarely

Never

17. Please select the answer that most accurately describes your freedom to make public affairs decisions independently at your unit.

- I have unlimited autonomy
- I have nearly unlimited autonomy
- I have somewhat unlimited autonomy
- It depends on the activity
- I have somewhat limited autonomy
- I have very limited autonomy
- I have no autonomy

18. True or false: During a time-sensitive crisis communication event, I would have more freedom to make public affairs decisions independently at my unit?

- True, I would have more autonomy during a crisis event
- False, I would have less autonomy during a crisis event
- Neither, I would have the same level of autonomy regardless of the type of event

19. Other than regularly scheduled staff meetings, on average, how often do you meet formally or informally with a member of the command cadre to discuss strategic communication issues?

- 1 time per year or less
- Semi-annually
- Quarterly
- 1-3 times per month
- Once a week
- 2-3 times per week
- 4-5 times per week or more

20. How many times have you done each of the following public affairs activities within the past 12 months?

None (1) | 1-2 times (2) | 3-5 times (3) | 6-9 times (4) | 10 or more times (5)

- _____ Researched public opinion on a controversial issue
- _____ Met with community leaders to introduce a policy initiative
- _____ Used an outside media tracking service
- _____ Used maritime safety data to develop public safety messages
- _____ Queried another unit to capture public affairs lessons learned
- _____ Conducted a media analysis within your area of responsibility
- _____ Attended a public meeting on a Coast Guard related issue

21. Public affairs officers often interact with external groups such as the media, community leaders, or other maritime groups. How often is information provided by the public affairs division to command cadre about the following external groups an important part of the command cadre decision making process?

- (1) Never
- (2) Rarely
- (3) About 25% of the time
- (4) About 50% of the time
- (5) About 75% of the time
- (6) Almost always
- (7) Always

_____ Media
_____ Community leaders
_____ Commercial interests
_____ Activist groups

22. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “completely accurate,” and 7 means “completely inaccurate,” please rate how well each of the following statements describes the work that you do.

Completely Accurate (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Inaccurate

_____ I make communication policy decisions.
_____ Although, I do not make communication policy decisions, I provide decision makers with suggestions, recommendations, and plans.
_____ I keep others at the unit informed about what the media report about our organization.
_____ I am the person who writes communication materials.
_____ I create opportunities for command cadre to hear the views of various internal and external publics.
_____ Because of my experience and training, others consider me the unit’s expert in solving communication and public affairs problems.
_____ I use my journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about our unit.
_____ I edit for grammar and spelling the materials written by others at the unit.

23. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “completely satisfied,” and 7 means “not at all satisfied,” please rate how satisfied you are with the public affairs program at your unit.

Completely Satisfied (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Not At All Satisfied

_____ Satisfaction level

24. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “no support,” and 7 means “very strong support,” please rate how supportive your command cadre is with regard to the unit’s public affairs function.

No Support (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Very Strong Support

_____Support level

25. Think about the value that your public affairs division has to your unit compared to other typical divisions in your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “very high value,” and 7 means “no value,” please rate the value of the public affairs division relative to other divisions within your unit.

Very High Value (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) No Value

_____Value level

26. Assess the extent to which your public affairs division makes a contribution to the strategic planning function of your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “no contribution,” and 7 means “very strong contribution,” please rate how much of a contribution your public affairs division makes to the strategic planning function of your unit.

No Contribution (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Very Strong Contribution

_____Strategic planning contribution

27. The public affairs officer billet at my unit should be a (please select all that apply)?

Primary duty PAO

Collateral duty PAO

Civilian position

Higher paygrade than current billet

Lower paygrade than current billet

No changes should be made to the public affairs officer billet at my unit

28. What, if anything, has changed with regard to the Coast Guard’s communication or public affairs responsibilities since the organization switched from the DOT to the DHS? Include comments about differences based on structural changes, such as the development of the Sector construct, if applicable.

(Open-ended response)

29. What, if anything, would you change about the public affairs structure, staffing, or roles at your unit?

(Open-ended response)

30. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about the Coast Guard public affairs program?

(Open-ended response)

Thank you for contributing your valuable time and insight into this study. Your input is appreciated.

Very respectfully,

LT Matthew Moorlag

APPENDIX II

Command Cadre Survey

Introduction to the Study:

As a U.S. Coast Guard member serving in a command staff or command cadre position, you are invited to participate in a study designed to provide insight into the current state of the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program and, if necessary, make recommendations to improve program structure. Lieutenant Matthew J. Moorlag, USCG is conducting this study as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to identify roles that PAOs perform in practice, skills that help PAOs succeed in the performance of their duties, and professional public affairs expectations from both the PAO and command perspective. The survey used in this research includes questions about PAO roles, training and education, professional expectations, communication methods, and billet structure. The results of this study may provide useful information for the Public Affairs program manager and other U.S. Coast Guard leaders responsible for the future direction of the program.

What will happen during the study?

As a U.S. Coast Guard member serving in a command staff/cadre position, you will be asked to answer a survey by selecting an appropriate response to each question in a series of 27 questions. Additionally, there are three open-ended questions at the end of the survey that ask you to provide additional information not previously covered. The survey should require no more than 20 minutes of your time to complete and your responses will be gathered electronically. If you have questions about the survey or any difficulty accessing it, please contact Matthew Moorlag at (919) 379-3887-home or (602) 510-5927-mobile.

Your privacy is important:

Every effort will be made to protect your privacy. Your name will not be used in any of the information obtained from this study or any of the research reports. No information will be attributed to any individual participant and your responses will not be correlated with the responses of your PAO. Results of each question will be compiled electronically by the Web survey program, and only the principal investigator, Matthew Moorlag, and the thesis advisor, Lois A. Boynton, Ph.D., have access to these data.

Risks and discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from your participation in this research.

Your rights:

It is your decision whether or not you want to participate in this study. You will not be treated any differently if you choose not to be in the study. If you decide to participate in the

study, you have the right to skip any specific questions you choose not to answer for any reason, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Institutional Review Board approval:

The Behavioral Institution Review Board (Behavioral – IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Behavioral – IRB at (919) 966-3113 or by e-mail at IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

By clicking the next button below, you authorize consent to participate in this study. Thank you for your participation and your dedication to the U.S. Coast Guard public affairs program.

1. Are you a Chief of Staff, Deputy Sector Commander, Executive Officer, or a member of the command cadre or command staff at your unit?

- Yes
- No

2. Please indicate your current assignment:

- Area/District Command
- Sector/Group, Air Station, MSST, DOG Command
- Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate your paygrade

- O7 or above
- O6
- O5
- O4
- O3
- Other (please specify)

4. Please indicate the paygrade of your Public Affairs Officer.

- O5 or above
- O4
- O3
- O1/O2
- CWO (any)
- E7-E9
- E6 or below
- Civilian
- Other (please specify)

5. Please indicate the status of your Public Affairs Officer.

- Primary duty PAO
- Collateral duty PAO
- Civilian position - primary duty
- Civilian position - collateral duty
- Other (please specify)

6. Have you received formal, dedicated public affairs training (e.g. - university degree program or DINFOS training)?

- Yes, university degree program in a public relations, journalism, communication, or related field.
- Yes, DINFOS training.
- Yes, both university degree program and DINFOS training.
- No, I have not received formal, dedicated public affairs/public relations training.
- Yes, other (please specify)

7. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "not at all satisfied," and 7 means "completely satisfied," please indicate how satisfied you are with the PAO's public affairs training?

Not At All Satisfied (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Satisfied

_____ Satisfaction level-PAO training

8. If your PAO could receive additional public affairs training, which of the following areas do you feel would be beneficial (please select all that apply)?

- Media relations
- Joint public affairs
- Crisis communications
- Public opinion polling and research
- Developing strategic messages
- Communicating effectively with external groups
- Media analysis and measurement
- Public speaking
- Other (please specify)

9. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "not at all satisfied," and 7 means "completely satisfied," please indicate how satisfied you are with the PAO's knowledge about operational facets of the Coast Guard given his or her rank and experience level?

Not At All Satisfied (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Satisfied

_____Operational Knowledge Satisfaction Level

10. Please select the answer that most accurately describes the PAO's freedom to make public affairs decisions independently at your unit.

- The PAO has unlimited autonomy
- The PAO has nearly unlimited autonomy
- The PAO has somewhat unlimited autonomy
- It depends on the activity
- The PAO has somewhat limited autonomy
- The PAO has very limited autonomy
- The PAO has no autonomy

11. True or false: During a time-sensitive crisis communication event, the PAO would have more freedom to make public affairs decisions independently at your command?

- True, the PAO would have more autonomy during a crisis event
- False, the PAO would have less autonomy during a crisis event
- Neither, the PAO has the same level of autonomy regardless of the type of event

12. Other than regularly scheduled staff meetings, on average, how often do you or other command staff/cadre members meet formally or informally with the PAO to discuss strategic communication issues?

- 1 time per year or less
- Semi-annually
- Quarterly
- 1-3 times per month
- Once a week
- 2-3 times per week
- 4-5 times per week or more

13. How likely are you to follow the PAO's advice on the following?

Very Unlikely (1) | Unlikely (2) | May or May Not (3) | Likely (4) | Very Likely (5)

- _____Dealing with the media
- _____Dealing with an activist group
- _____Understanding opposing viewpoints
- _____Developing public affairs strategies
- _____Dealing with negative media coverage

14. On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "completely disagree," and 7 meaning "completely agree," please indicate the response that most accurately describes the PAO relationship with command cadre at your command.

Completely Disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Agree

- _____ The PAO is consulted for input during most or all strategic planning meetings where decisions will affect the public.
- _____ The PAO makes valuable contributions to the overall effectiveness of command cadre at your command.
- _____ The PAO provides valuable insight into the external public affairs environment at your command.
- _____ Command cadre use PAO directed research to understand public affairs threats and opportunities in your AOR.
- _____ PAOs are valuable communication liaisons between the Coast Guard and communities within your AOR.

15. How likely is it that the PAO will be involved in managing the unit's communication response to a policy issue involving each of the following?

Very Unlikely (1) | Unlikely (2) | May or May Not (3) | Likely (4) | Very Likely (5)

- _____ Commercial interest
- _____ Media representative
- _____ Community leaders
- _____ Activist group
- _____ Maritime partners

16. Think about public affairs activities that the PAO should focus on in his or her current position (does not include other members of the PA division), and if those activities are important to the PAOs success at your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "not important" for the PAO position, and 7 means "extremely important" for the PAO position, please evaluate the importance of the following public affairs activities:

Not Important (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely Important

- _____ Writing press releases and feature articles
- _____ Shooting/editing video or still photography
- _____ Serving as a public affairs representative during an advancement ceremony or other internal event
- _____ Producing audio/visual for public affairs' online/print publications
- _____ Coordinating media interviews and press conferences
- _____ Managing the unit's response to public affairs issues
- _____ Using research to segment publics and evaluate campaigns
- _____ Briefing command cadre on Coast Guard or other media coverage
- _____ Developing goals and objectives for your division
- _____ Developing strategies for solving public affairs and communication problems

17. The following question concerns your confidence in your PAO's overall ability to conduct various public affairs activities. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "not confident," and 7 meaning "completely confident," please rate the following.

Not Confident (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Confident

- _____ Your PAO's ability to write press releases
- _____ Your PAO's ability to develop and implement a strategic public affairs plan for your unit
- _____ Your PAO's ability to conduct interviews and other media relations activities
- _____ Your PAO's ability to conduct formal research on public affairs issues relevant to your unit
- _____ Your PAO's ability to conduct informal research on public affairs issues relevant to your unit
- _____ Your PAO's ability to effectively communicate with outside organizations about Coast Guard issues

18. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "completely disagree," and 7 meaning "completely agree," please describe your agreement with each of the following approaches to public affairs

Completely Disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Agree

- _____ Public affairs should release only favorable information about Coast Guard activities that generates positive coverage of the Coast Guard.
- _____ Public affairs' main responsibility is to educate the American public about Coast Guard activities, both positive and negative.
- _____ When introducing controversial issues to a public, the public affairs officer and command cadre develop strategic messages to persuade publics to accept the Coast Guard's position.
- _____ When introducing controversial issues to a public, the public affairs officer and command cadre seek to manage conflict with opposition groups to find the best solution to a problem, even if it means altering Coast Guard plans.
- _____ The public affairs officer and command cadre should not attempt to manage conflict with external groups once a policy decision has been made.

19. How likely is it that you will seek input from each of the following before introducing a relevant initiative to the public?

Very Unlikely | Unlikely | May or May Not | Likely | Very Likely

- _____ Maritime partners

- _____ Community leaders
- _____ Activist groups in your area of responsibility
- _____ Commercial interests

20. Public affairs officers often interact with external groups such as the media, community leaders, or other maritime groups. How often is information provided by the public affairs division to command cadre about the following external groups an important part of the command cadre decision making process?

- (1) Never
- (2) Rarely
- (3) About 25% of the time
- (4) About 50% of the time
- (5) About 75% of the time
- (6) Almost always
- (7) Always

- _____ Media
- _____ Community leaders
- _____ Commercial interests
- _____ Activist groups

21. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “completely inaccurate,” and 7 means “completely accurate,” please rate how well each of the following statements describes the work that the PAO (not including others in the PA division) does at your unit.

Completely Inaccurate (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Completely Accurate

- _____ The PAO makes communication policy decisions.
- _____ Although the PAO does not normally make communication policy decisions, he or she provides decision-makers with suggestions, recommendations, and plans.
- _____ The PAO keeps others at the unit informed about what the media report about our organization.
- _____ The PAO is the person who writes communication materials.
- _____ The PAO creates opportunities for command cadre to hear the views of various internal and external publics.
- _____ Because of the PAO's experience and training, others consider him or her the unit's expert in solving communication and public affairs problems.
- _____ The PAO uses journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about our unit.
- _____ The PAO edits for grammar and spelling the materials written by others at the unit.

22. The following questions concern the ability of your PAO to conduct various public affairs activities. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "not at all prepared," and 7 meaning "fully prepared," please rate how prepared your PAO is to do the following:

Not At All Prepared (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) **Fully Prepared**

_____ Develop coordinated messages with other DHS agencies or maritime partners about Homeland Security initiatives.

_____ Discuss a search and rescue case with the media.

_____ Prepare an assessment of the external public affairs environment in your AOR.

_____ Effectively communicate with the public in a crisis communications event (e.g. - preventable loss of life to Coast Guard personnel, natural disaster, or other major event).

_____ Explain the Coast Guard's position on an issue to an activist group or citizen group.

23. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “no support,” and 7 means “very strong support,” please rate the level of support the PAO provides to command cadre with regard to the unit’s public affairs function.

No Support (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) **Very Strong Support**

_____ Support level

24. Think about the value that your public affairs division provides compared to other typical divisions in your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “no value”, and 7 means “very high value,” please rate the value of the public affairs division relative to other divisions within your unit.

No Value (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) **Very High Value**

_____ Value level

25. Assess the extent to which your public affairs division makes a contribution to the strategic planning function of your unit. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “no contribution,” and 7 means “very strong contribution,” please rate how much of a contribution your public affairs division makes to the strategic planning function of your unit.

No Contribution (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) **Very Strong Contribution**

_____ Strategic planning contribution

26. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all satisfied,” and 7 means “completely satisfied,” please rate how satisfied you are with the public affairs program at your unit.

Not At All Satisfied (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) **Completely Satisfied**

_____ Program Satisfaction level

27. The public affairs officer billet at my command should be a (please select all that apply)?

- Primary duty PAO
- Collateral duty PAO
- Civilian position
- Higher paygrade than current billet
- Lower paygrade than current billet
- Other (please specify)

28. What, if anything, has changed with regard to the Coast Guard's communication or public affairs responsibilities since the organization switched from the DOT to the DHS? Include comments about differences based on structural changes, such as the development of the Sector construct, if applicable.

(Open-ended response)

29. What, if anything, would you change about the public affairs structure, staffing, or roles at your unit?

(Open-ended response)

30. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about the Coast Guard public affairs program?

(Open-ended response)

Thank you for contributing your valuable time and insight into this study. Your input is appreciated.

Very respectfully,

LT Matthew Moorlag

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