Voiced Values: 
Communicating a Local Organizational Identity for Disability 

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Abstract

This dissertation explores organizational identity as a concept within an issues management framework. Ten local, disability-related nonprofit organizations were used to examine how — as measured through their perceived and projected values — organizational identity is understood, experienced, and expressed. Results of quantitative content analysis of organizational documents and an interpretive analysis of in-depth interviews with organizational leaders indicated the presence of a collective disability identity among these organizations. This dissertation introduces the concept of “cause identity” as an important consideration for communication practice and research. Cause identity is an organization’s identity based on personal and emotional values centered around a commitment to a particular movement or set of principles.
To DAD
My favorite scholar, my inspiration, my friend.
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Preface

Throughout my youth I was an artist, a writer, a creator, and a free spirit—always looking for a new way to communicate my ideas. By the age of 18, I’d found the idea I knew I needed to communicate about. And that was disability. Part of taking on a project of personal significance is to challenge yourself to look at something in an entirely new way. The common advice of my advisor: “Take your voice out of it.” But to fail to acknowledge my own personal investment in this work would be to deceive the reader. Therefore, I went into and away from this work with some personal thoughts on disability. In summary, I believe:

- There is a true lack of acceptance of persons with disabilities.
- There are many societal improvements that would enable persons with disabilities to experience life in manners equal to others. But we’re not there yet.
- That our nonprofit organizations are the frontrunners in reducing stigma, erasing barriers, and bringing valuable information, education, programs, and services to persons with disabilities, as well as a larger audience.
- That clear and consistent values-based communication could dictate the vitality and sustainability of disability issues for years to come.

With a passion to understand the social construct of disability and promote the disability movement comes an obligation. My research aims not only to further scholarship, but provide worthy nonprofit organizations with additional feedback and tools that can assist them in achieving larger goals. And if this dissertation gets one person – just one person – to think longer than a minute about disability, then my real work has just begun.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In today’s information age, the concept of issues management quietly “replaced the cocktail party” as a way for public relations practitioners to successfully bridge the gap between organizations and their publics (Saffir, 2006, n.p.). The influence of an organization’s identity within an issues management framework may be one way in which the organization successfully connects with publics during organizational change. This dissertation provides an in-depth look at issues management and, more specifically, the concept of organizational identity.

Basic public relations texts identify issues management as a way of pinpointing the issues and trends that affect the way in which an organization functions; effective issues management leads to strategic action that assists the organization in responding to these issues and trends (Guth & Marsh, 2005; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Van Leuven, 2004). When utilized fully, issues management involves the coordination of several departments within an organization, including public relations, marketing, legal, finance, etc. At times, public relations professionals take a leadership role in the strategic planning required. In other instances, this management function belongs to another department.

Most frequently, issues management is cited as being crucial to the management of corporate reputation during a crisis. Much value is placed on an organization’s ability to monitor and scan the environment; identification of the most-important trends allows the organization to make decisions that build or repair relationships, even when reacting to unexpected events. The Tylenol case of 1982 is a classic example of a public relations crisis that was dealt with quickly and responsibly, and serves as a benchmark for successful crisis management (Birch, 1994;
Hamiltion, 1986). When seven people died because some Tylenol capsules were laced with cyanide, Johnson & Johnson responded effectively through strategic communication and action. Johnson & Johnson not only benefited from its well-established corporate brand associated with a long history of success, but its management employed a quick and appropriate response after a thorough assessment of the issues facing its company and its publics (Center & Jackson, 2003).

This dissertation unites scholarship in public relations and organizational communication that has extensively explored the role of issues management; this scholarship, however, has yet to fully integrate issues management concepts theoretically. Issues management requires long-term strategic planning, but discussion of issues management is often tactic-focused for short-term issues such as crisis response, rather than strategy-focused for long-term issues such as reputation management and business development (Heath, 1997; Renfro, 1993). Extensive review of the literature reveals six facets related to long-term issues management. Each has been defined and studied in various academic disciplines, but they have not been grouped together to show the significance issues management can have in assisting an organization in long-term strategic planning efforts. The six concepts reviewed in this dissertation are: 1) the issues life cycle (see Botan & Taylor, 2004; Downs, 1991; Hallahan, 2001); 2) environmental scanning (see Coates, Coates, Jarratt, & Heinz, 1986; Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995; Heath, 1997; Renfro, 1993; Stoffels, 1994); 3) legitimacy (see Coombs, 1992; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Meltzer, 2001); 4) advocacy and persuasion (see Garcia, 1999; Perloff, 1993; Pfau & Parrott, 1993; Rutherford, 2000); 5) relationship management (see Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Bridges & Nelson, 2000; Grunig, 2001; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Brunig, 2000a, 2000b; Salott, Lyon, Acosta-Alzura & Jones, 2003); and 6) organizational identity (see Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Illia, et al., 2004; Rowden, 2000; Rowden, 2004). The majority of these concepts have been explored by communication scholars because they can be applied directly to critical organizational situations;
The final one, organizational identity, has received the least attention in issues management literature, particularly in the field of public relations.

The role of organizational identity in issues management is the focus of this dissertation because it is the cornerstone of organizational stability. Foundational research in organizational communication and business management identifies organizational identity as what is central, distinct, and enduring about an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985), and current scholarship continues to build on this definition. Organizational identity, however, is also malleable; organizations must respond to environmental changes and long-term growth, and their identities often change in response. Within an issues management framework, organizational identity takes on a new role as the cornerstone of stability, which organizations rely on to express their positions on issues. Issues may affect both how organizational members perceive the organizational identity and how the organization actually projects its organizational identity to others (Illia, Schmid, Fischbach, Hangartner & Rivola, 2004). Organizational identity will assist the organization in achieving goals related to strategic planning and can shape how legitimate or credible an organization is perceived to be by its publics, whether on a day-to-day basis or during a crisis. That is, as an organization develops and changes over its lifespan, its identity will always play a role in the success or failure of its efforts (Heath & Coombs, 2006; Rowden, 2004).

Although it is an enduring concept associated with the underlying purpose of the organization, organizational identity must adapt to its evolving environment, consistently communicating the organization’s purpose during times of change, and continuously fostering organization-public relationships.

Organizational identity may also be thought of as a “fixed image within an otherwise moving world” (Rowden, 2000, p. 1). In fact, just as a loss of an individual’s identity can pose a serious threat to personal health, the loss of an organization’s identity can pose a serious threat
to an organization’s survival (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Applying the study of issues management to long-term issues and strategic goals is particularly important to nonprofit organizations that must sustain active relationships with publics. Researchers (see Botan & Taylor, 2004; Coombs, 1992; Henderson, 2005; Lellis, 2006a, 2006b) have looked at how issues management serves as a viable communication strategy specifically for nonprofit organizations and activist groups. For example, scholars note that nonprofit organizations are under pressure to establish long-term relationships with publics and build a community of support that leads to financial sustainability (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Lellis, 2006a). Nonprofit organizations often represent intangible services rather than tangible products. A solid organizational identity fosters connections between organizations and publics, branding the issues of importance.

Organizational identity needs to be part of the issues management picture because it is pervasive, often dictating the overall nature of organization-public relationships or driving communication efforts. This is especially true for organizations that tackle sensitive issues. This dissertation uses disability as an example.

Many nonprofit organizations have been created to address the long-term and growing issue of disability, as Americans live longer and face more health problems, including chronic impairments that lead to disabilities (Fijiura, 2006). Some media have integrated medical and healthcare topics in their coverage that is easily accessible by a majority of the population, and disability activist groups have opened the doors for discussion of issues in influential arenas such as politics and education. An example is the American Association of People with Disabilities, whose Web site (2007) boasts a plethora of information on the need to publicly address disability issues. In addition, open discussion about disability is becoming more and more common as American society continues to recognize the significance of these discussions (Field & Jette, 2007).
Communication campaigns about disability or chronic health issues – recent and memorable ones include campaigns for awareness of HIV/AIDS, obesity, and cancer – rely on a variety of techniques to make the issues meaningful to their public. A stronger strategic emphasis, however, is needed to help these organizations build issues that will maintain a long-term presence on the media’s agenda and in the public’s view, not just for short-term events or crises. This dissertation poses this argument as one worthy of study. An important piece of the issues management “puzzle” when it comes to long-term stability may be organizational identity. Rather than rely on short-term “popularity” of a specific issue, a nonprofit organization must consider its overall identity within an issues management framework. The vast majority of communication on the part of nonprofit groups is issue-driven; organizational identities create identifiable “faces” for these issues. A clear organizational identity that is communicated well and maintained appropriately may determine the overall viability of the organization, and in turn, the issue.

This dissertation explores organizational identity for nonprofit organizations that serve persons with disabilities, and therefore communicate about disability issues. Much of the current literature addressing the role of issues management and organizational identity focuses on the corporate sector, neglecting issue-driven, nonprofit groups. Research in this area can help nonprofit organizations understand the strategic roles of their identities within an issues management framework, enabling them to target publics more adequately with appropriate messages, ascertain and change organizational images, and better measure the salience of organizational goals and objectives. Although successful communication about organizational identity is important to crisis and risk situations, examining the role of an organization’s identity in strategic issues management may help further the scholarship that addresses long-term organizational stability and success.
Regardless of the importance of identity to organizational survival, the concept itself is nebulous (Ravasi & Van Rekom, 2003). An examination of identity is an assessment of what an organization stands for, its core aims, and how it is unique or sets itself apart from others (Van den Bosch, De Jong & Elving, 2005). Organizational identity, however, is difficult to define, quite subjective, and is created and altered over time. These challenges make organizational identity a complex topic to explore through empirical research. Many researchers have used the case study approach, which brings together a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g. focus groups, in-depth interviews, content analysis). These case studies provide ways to measure organizational belief systems, symbolic representations, and patterns of social interaction and behavior (see Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Henderson, 2005; Illia, et al., 2004; Ravasi & Van Rekom, 2003; Rosson & Brooks, 2004; Rudd, 2000). Analyses examine the essence of how an organization presents itself or wants to present itself to the outside world.

Organizational identity may be primarily driven by the underlying values that guide organizational patterns of decision making, communication, and interaction. According to Milton Rokeach (1968, 1973), values are a central concept for all individuals. They are the dominant beliefs that comprise one’s overall belief system. Individuals have a variety of dominant beliefs, which allow for the assessment of objects or situations and lead to actions or behaviors. Phillip J. Aust (2000, 2004) took the values concept from the individual level of Rokeach’s work to the organizational level with his research that examined an organization’s identity by an analysis of communicated values—or the values apparent in the text used in organizational communication materials. He posited that an organization operates under the values central to its original founders as well as the members who dictate current decision making and communication efforts. Therefore, values are at the core of organizational identity, and
organizational leaders have to adapt those values to organizational and environmental changes in order to survive and grow.

Organizations that communicate about disability issues each have unique characteristics, but all have the common goal of communicating about values-laden, challenging, and long-term health topics that affect many members of society. This study examined whether a group of local disability-related nonprofit organizations share similar values, as these values may guide their abilities to communicate successfully with publics. Current research does not address the role of organizational identity specifically for disability-related organizations. Achieving long-term sustainability for disability issues is important to organizational survival, and understanding the values, or dominant beliefs, and the extent to which they are shared may provide researchers and practitioners with new ways of thinking about how organizational identity specifically serves disability-related organizations. The following chapter provides an overview of the issues management and organizational identity literature, supporting the argument that organizational identity can and should be measured through values research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature reviewed here draws from a wide range of scholarship, uniting public relations and business management concepts with organizational communication theory. It begins with a discussion of literature that addresses issues management, breaking down the integral components of issues management that make it an effective long-term strategic management tool. The concept of organizational identity is discussed in depth, highlighting research conducted specifically with nonprofit organizations. Finally, the theoretical foundation of symbolic interactionism is introduced as a viable option for grounding this research, and literature that supports the concept of organizational identity as a measurement of communicated values is summarized to explain how this research will be conducted.

What is Issues Management?

In order to discuss the concepts and process of issues management, it is imperative to begin by defining the terms “publics” and “issue.” Publics are “identifiable group[s], either inside or outside an organization, whose opinions on issues can affect the success of an organization” (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 9). A topic becomes an issue when publics attach significance to it (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). An issue is often viewed as a point of controversy or dispute (Heath, 1997), hence the emphasis on issues management in crisis communication. If an issue creates conflict in the public sphere, media become interested, and publics become active in the debate (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). An issue, however, should be distinguished from a crisis. While a crisis is acute and unexpected, issues are chronic and often anticipated (Smudde, 2001).
The concept of issues management was introduced during the turbulent sociopolitical times of the 1960s, when corporations realized that they would need to satisfy multiple stakeholders in order to maintain viable businesses (Heath, 1997). Issues management scholarship, which became significant in the 1980s, has focused mostly on explicating terms and conceptualizing its applicability as a tool used by organizations. Practitioners use issues management to determine the best course of action when reacting to an issue that immediately affects the business. Scholars continue to discuss how issues management helps organizations react to risk or crises, influence public policy, or combat organizational challenges (see Coates, Coates, Jarratt, & Heinz, 1986; Heath, 1997; Heath & Associates, 1988; Renfro, 1993; Stoffels, 1994). Issues management takes the perspective that a negative perception of issues by publics makes the organization-public relationship a difficult one. Issues management can mitigate this negative perception or manage it when it occurs (Miller, 1999). In other words, issues management works as a way to “answer” to publics, repair the images of organizations in times of need (Kitto 1998/1999), or structure public discussion to the benefit of the organization (Heath, 1997). Therefore, research and practice related to issues management are often limited to crisis or risk communication because its effectiveness in positively shaping outcomes for short-term controversies is easily demonstrated (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995; Heath & Associates, 1988).

Increasingly, issues management is viewed as the regulation of the threats and the opportunities that affect the overall function, image, and long-term reputation of an organization (Bridges, 2004). Issues management is described as a must for strategic planning (Renfro, 1993)—a way to “plot the future” of an organization (Coombs, 1992, p. 102). If organizations can continuously and appropriately identify, monitor, and analyze ongoing trends in public opinion about an organization and its issues, then issues management may improve overall
organizational operations, solidify and/or sustain longer-term relationships with stakeholders, and improve the bottom line. The role of the issues manager as a leader in strategic decision making involves the interactions among the self, publics, society, stakeholders, and the organization (Bowen, 2005). Issues management bridges any gaps between an organization and its publics (Bridges, 2004; Bridges & Nelson, 2000) and “play[s] an important role in linking public relations practices to a complex organizational environment” (Lauzen & Dozier, 1994, p. 180). The following section formulates a conceptual framework for issues management.

**A Conceptual Framework for Issues Management**

Six elements may be helpful to conceptualize the role of issues management within public relations practice. As noted earlier, each element has been studied by various research communities; this research presents a framework that shows the breath and depth of what issues management entails. The following elements may improve the ability of organizations to strategically position issues in the minds of publics and sustain these issues in a constantly changing environment.

**Concept #1: The Issues Life Cycle**

The issues life cycle has been described as the way in which issues take lives of their own, moving through stages of development from pre-issues to dormancy (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Downs, 1991; Hallahan, 2001; Lauzen, 1997). Pre-issues have not yet been identified as significant by publics but have that potential. Potential issues are those that publics have begun to identify as significant; public issues are those endorsed by major publics (Lauzen, 1997). An issue becomes critical when it is “ready for resolution in the minds of most publics” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 657), and dormant issues are resolved or have faded from the public eye. The dormant phase does not mean that the issue is gone. Although issues may lose some visibility, they may reappear or return in a transformed way.
Publics play their own part in the issues life cycle. As a group, publics cycle through their own stages, being active, aroused, or aware of the various topics that affect their lives. This interaction between publics and issues may dictate the significance that publics attach to the issue. Publics may also enter a stage of inactivity or choose to remove themselves from the issue debate, making them “nonpublics” (Hallahan, 2001).

Anthony Down’s (1991) seminal work on issues management described NASA’s ability to interest its publics for a short period of time, drawing publics in by using spectacular space shots and highlighting the feat of Americans walking on the moon. Fascination dwindled, however, when NASA was not able to follow up its success in entertaining the American public with anything more dramatic. This cyclical motion illustrates the fragility of issues in the minds of publics—the life cycle is often a natural progression, which creates immense challenges for communication professionals trying to maintain public interest for long-term sustainability. If organizations can understand both how issues cycle through stages of development (Botan & Taylor, 2004) and how publics cycle through stages of awareness, activation, and response (Hallahan, 2001), they will be able to develop long-term communication plans that can keep their more-important issues alive and valid for invested publics. Organizations must have an understanding of the issues life cycle for more than crisis anticipation.

**Concept #2: Environmental Scanning**

John D. Stoffels (1994) described environmental scanning as a “methodology for coping with external competitive, social, economic and technical issues that may be difficult to observe or diagnose but that cannot be ignored and will not go away” (p. 1). Opportunities and threats both require strategic planning to be managed appropriately and aid organizations in adapting successfully within a constantly evolving environment. Environmental scanning helps organizations detect issues early—often in what Martha M. Lauzen (1997) called the pre- or
potential stages – and accurately, which leads to stronger relationships with publics. Proactive monitoring and forecasting of issues may be crucial for an organization’s success (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995).

Environmental scanning is often related to successful strategic planning in the corporate environment (see Coates, Coates, Jarratt, & Heinz, 1986; Renfro, 1993; Stoffels, 1994). For example, in a management study on the U.S. railroad industry, Pamela S. Barr, J. L. Stimpert, and Anne S. Huff (1992) demonstrated the advantages of management’s awareness of new and changing environmental conditions. Their research mapped the mental models – or the cognitive processes – involved in managers’ recognition of and adaptation to environmental issues affecting two Midwestern railroads, the C&NW and the Rock Island. Between 1949 and 1973, the railroad industry faced major economic issues, including a loss of a large number of major railroads and a shift in market share because of increasing motor carrier services. Barr, Stimpert, and Huff demonstrated, through a content analysis of letters to shareholders, that C&NW was able to achieve success because of its ability to identify and react to ongoing changes in the competitive environment. C&NW altered its costs, productivity, and maintenance strategies in order to achieve a competitive position in the marketplace. The Rock Island was unable to adapt to changes because it did not learn from its environmental context, and went bankrupt in the 1970s. The C&NW was able to renew its organization not simply because its managers noticed changes. Additionally, Barr, Stimpert, and Huff argued, “noticing must lead to new understandings and adoption of appropriate responses” (p. 28). Environmental scanning will not work alone. Management must be prepared to react to ongoing changes and fluctuations as these are called to attention.

This example is not based on changes in public opinion, which is also a major goal of environmental scanning. If communications departments can be aware of fluctuations in public
opinion as these changes occur, this awareness ultimately benefits the organization and organization-public relationships. Environmental scanning that perpetuates effective public relations practices should lead to public support, which often has an effect on the survival of the organization (Heath, 1997).

**Concept #3: Legitimacy**

Legitimacy is “at the core” of most public relations practices and occurs when issues are viewed as significant ones within the context of social norms or values (Meltzer, 2001, p. 321). Consider the current debate surrounding obesity (Nestle & Jacobson, 2000). In order for corporate, government, and nonprofit organizations to achieve communication goals about this issue, publics must believe the issue of obesity to be a legitimate one (Coombs, 1992). Organizations can be gateways to this legitimacy by positioning an issue as one that is important to a variety of stakeholders. For example, obesity messages from organizations must reach stakeholders such as schools, government agencies, medical centers, workplaces, and individuals. Maribeth S. Metzler (2001) purported that although legitimacy is important for short-term issues, it also has implications for long-term strategic planning. Keeping publics on the same page as the organization throughout its lifetime is important to organizational sustainability.

Issues management may close legitimacy gaps – or misalignments with what an organization is doing and what its publics expect it to be doing – that may occur when significant issues arise (Heath, 1997; Heath & Coombs, 2006). In W. Timothy Coombs’ (1992) assessment of hunger as an issue, the author raised the importance of establishing multiple levels of legitimacy for the cause. Legitimacy gaps can occur in several contexts. For example, although publics must perceive policy proposals or recommendations as being legitimate, the people promoting these recommendations should also be considered legitimate. Gaining this credibility for representatives or issue managers – who attempt to mobilize publics and “sell” policy
proposals as the appropriate answers to issues – is just as important as legitimizing the policy proposal and the issue itself. Therefore, although legitimacy is often viewed in the context of organizational legitimacy, issues and advocates must also be legitimized by publics.

**Concept #4: Advocacy and Persuasion**

Persuasion is an important element in issues management because persuasive messages may shape attitudes, public opinion, and behaviors. If messages have an impact on any of these outcomes, then public interest in an issue may be maintained and/or increased (Perloff, 1993, Pfau & Parrott, 1993). Persuasion research often focuses on the power of an individual voice in shaping public opinion. The individuals, known as opinion leaders, are people who publics trust, and therefore publics are more likely to believe the message. Opinion leaders are given this status by their publics; whether the opinion leader is the local hairdresser or an international celebrity is a moot point. Some of the most-effective opinion leaders are able to involve diverse, new, or different publics in unique ways. For example, in an analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” communication scholars Michael C. Leff and Ebony A. Utley (2004) recognized the ability of King to simultaneously criticize, yet engage his white audience in reevaluating their view of African Americans.

Organizations have the opportunity to use persuasion to relate issues to the social or environmental factors that motivate publics to action (Perloff, 1993). Issues are addressed publicly through persuasive advocacy, which is the process an individual or organization undertakes in order to spread a convincing position on an issue (Garcia, 1999). Throughout history, advocacy has been particularly important for nonprofit organizations; it brands altruism by mobilizing publics and soliciting support through persuasive messages (Rutherford, 2000). If publics are motivated to actively engage with an issue, it ultimately benefits the messenger and/or the issue at hand.
Concept #5: Relationship Management

A key goal of issues management is to build relationships with multiple publics who have varying views on the issue (Bridges & Nelson, 2000; Burkowitz & Turnmire, 1994). Hence, public relations professionals and issues managers employ communications processes that connect organizations and their publics and help balance the interests of both groups (Grunig, 2001; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003). Similar to interpersonal relationships, organization-public relationships include such qualities as adaptation, commitment, cooperation, trust, reciprocity, and openness (Ledingham, 2003).

Botan and Taylor (2004) defined public relations as a process focused not only on the relationships between organizations and publics, but the shared meaning that may result. Issues management may be a way to close the legitimacy gap between organizations and their stakeholders through a “clear-eyed view of long-term reputation management” (Bryan, 1997, p. 14). Good decisions can be made when relationships are strong (Bowen, 2005). John A. Ledingham and Stephen D. Bruning (2000b) used surveys to examine the link between public relations practices and positive relationship-building outcomes. A sample of 448 residents – in a community of 80,000 residents that is served exclusively by a local telephone company – were asked to rate the company on a relationship scale with five dimensions: trust, investment, commitment, involvement, and openness. The telephone company then implemented a “managed communication program in which the company increased its communication with the local community” (p. 63). This program included an increase in press coverage that highlighted the different ways in which the company positively serves the local community. Results of a follow-up survey with 136 of the original respondents indicated that significantly higher scores on the organization-public relationship measure were achieved. Although this research does not
indicate how the telephone company would survive if complicated environmental issues arose, it does serve as an example of the power of relationship building in engaging publics and influencing the public’s opinion of a corporation. Ledingham and Bruning acknowledged that regardless of the circumstances surrounding communication efforts, effective public relations may lead to positive relationship outcomes for organizations and their publics.

**Concept #6: Organizational Identity**

The sixth facet of issues management, the ability to successfully label and communicate an organization’s identity as well as the identity of the issue at hand, may be a key to the relationship-building process because of its enduring nature (Rowden, 2000). Organizational identity scholarship has acknowledged the interconnectedness of identity with changing social and cultural factors, which often become issues. For example, Jane E. Dutton and Janet M. Dukerich (1991) conducted a case study with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, an organization forced to deal with the issue of homelessness. Although the organization struggled with how to respond to the growing and changing issue, the authors describe the organization’s identity as a “critical construct for understanding the evolution of issue interpretations, emotions, and actions over time” (p. 543). The organization’s identity served as a guide, reminding internal members of the organization how it wished to interact with publics and be perceived by others during its struggle with an important social issue.

Laura Illia et al.’s (2004) work supports the placement of organizational identity within an issues management framework. They reviewed the concept of organizational identity as something influenced by the relationship of the organization with publics in an evolving issues-laden environment. Their article in *Corporate Reputation Review* illustrated this by tracing the evolution of the concept of corporate identity. Early corporate identity scholarship linked corporate identity to visual symbols such as logos, with the main goal being to connect with
customers in a memorable way. Identity evolved to represent a corporate “personality,” which recognized the importance of communicating a particular image to customers and other multiple stakeholders. Further research identified the role of communicating symbols and behaviors. In conclusion, Illia et al. proposed that organizational identity may be better defined as a strategic process that “conjoins internal needs and external expectations” (p. 11). The authors suggested that researchers recognize the role of organizational identity in shaping issues and the role of issues in shaping organizational identity. Organizational identity serves as a management function that is a “core element of organizational fitness for change” (Illia et al., 2004, p. 12).

In a case study example, Illia et al.’s (2004) research considered the organizational identity of a government regulatory agency and applied a four-step process that 1) measured the projected organizational identity, or the identity that an organization communicates externally; 2) ranked the importance of issues according to the impact on the organization’s projected identity; 3) measured perceived organizational identity – this being the identity that an organization understands and wishes to communicate – and considered internal issues along with the level of agreement between the projected and perceived organizational identity; and 4) ranked issues a second time based on the impact on perceived organizational identity and internal issues. Hence, organizational identity may clarify any gaps of understanding between an organization and its publics. Their research described organizational identity as a management function.

Despite this important function, organizational identity has received less attention in public relations scholarship than the other five concepts. Most organizational identity work, which is rooted in organizational and business communication literature, alludes to the importance of the long-term organization-public relationship (see Diamond, 1993; Rowden, 2004; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998), considered a crucial component of effective public relations. There is room, however, for organizational identity to make a more significant mark on public
relations scholarship, as it has been discussed as a part of successful issues management. The next section reviews how organizational identity has been conceptualized and studied in a variety of disciplines, and summarizes its place in public relations research.

Organizational Identity as a Concept of Study

Organizational identity grew out of early work on individual identity. Organizational communication scholar Dennis A. Gioia (1998) described the “path from individual identity to organizational identity” (p. 18) from the work of ancient Greeks to modern psychologists, with the cornerstone idea that identity is “what makes a person a person” (p. 19). Similarly, it appears that organizational identity may simply be described as what makes an organization an organization. This foundation is evident in organizational identity literature. As described earlier, Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten’s (1985) seminal work identified three characteristics of organizational identity. First, identity is central to the organization. An organization must have something essential about it that gives it meaning. Essential characteristics influence how organizational members make decisions; these characteristics can change based on the arena in which the identity must be exposed to others. Second, organizational identity makes an organization distinct from other organizations. This characteristic reflects how an organization views itself as being different from other organizations, and therefore an organization may position itself appropriately in the marketplace. Third, identity is enduring. Although identity is viewed as a stabilizing force, an organization’s identity must adapt to changes in the environment.

In 1988, organizational communication scholar Michael A. Diamond defined organizational identity as “the totality of repetitive patterns of individual behavior and interpersonal relationships that taken together comprise the unacknowledged meaning of organizational life” (p. 169). Hence, all organizations have an underlying identity made of
components that can be studied. Although his work suggested that organizational identity has been studied as something that is formed within the organization, research has advanced to recognize that organizational identity is also communicated to external publics (Alessandri, 2001; Diamond, 1988). For example, Rossan and Brooks (2004) described identity as the way an organization views itself and how it would like others to view it. Communication scholar Sue Westcott Alessandri (2001) purported that not only is organizational identity “the presentation of the firm,” but it should perpetuate the organization’s mission (p. 176). Organizational identity, according to business scholar Charles J. Fomburn (1996), “develops from within.” [and] explains the kinds of relationships companies establish with their four most critical constituencies: employees, consumers, investors, and local communities” (p. 111). Keeping employees happy and satisfied at work has been linked to organizations’ financial successes and long-term reputations. Consumers depend on organizations to provide consistent services and quality products. Investors identify a successful organization as one that employs quality people who generate strong earnings and influence stability and growth. And organizations that give back to the community are seen as responsible strongholds. In the end, “the best regarded companies appear to boast a strong sense of identity” (p. 134). This contention may be because the best organizations know who they are and what they want to be.

Still, organizational identity is viewed as an “unconscious foundation for organizational culture” (Diamond, 1993, p. 77, emphasis added) and this culture is vulnerable. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), the loss of organizational identity is detrimental to organizational survival. There are instances in which organizations may have dual or competing identities, depending on the roles organizations must play at any given time. Albert and Whetten used the example of a university that struggled with the competing identities of being a church and a business during a time of retrenchment. Each identity upheld a set of core values (or what makes
the organization an organization). Under its church identity, the university’s major role was described as “leading the world rather than being led by external secular forces” (p. 283), which shaped the university as one that is focused on virtues such as faith and wisdom. In contrast, under its business identity, the university’s major role was to be a utilitarian organization focused on issues such as cost effectiveness. Although these identities may coexist peacefully for much of the time, conflict is bound to surface when important fiscal decisions must be made. This example illustrates the role identity plays in business practices.

Although it is often related to or a part of other organizational communication concepts, organizational identity should be distinguished from image, reputation, and identification. First, an organization’s image is not the same at its identity. The image of an organization is how an organization is perceived by outsiders (Rosson and Brooks, 2004). Although image is similar to projected identity, or the identity that is being communicated to publics, organizational identity is defined by the organization’s members and image is not. Image may also be short-lived depending on the circumstances, while identity has long-term implications. Image, if it is adequately understood by the organization, may be built, altered, and changed (Schuler, 2004).

The concept of reputation is often linked to both identity and image. Reputation research considers the importance and interaction of societal expectations, corporate personality, and trust (Berens & Van Riel, 2004). For example, although reputation may be severely damaged by a crisis, an organizational identity should serve an organization throughout a period of crisis because organizational identity 1) is more stable than reputation; and 2) represents the important underlying values of the organization over time. Reputation is more vulnerable, which may explain why the concept receives more research attention from business and communication scholars (see Berens and Van Riel, 2004; Bromley, 1993, 2002; Caruana, 1997; Frombrun, 1996;
Organizational identity is often integrated into measures of reputation, serving as only one facet within a more-complex framework. For example, Van den Bosch et al.’s (2005) study of visual identity distinguished five dimensions of reputation that are commonly studied through empirical research: 1) visibility, or the “prominence of the brand in the minds of customers” (p. 109); 2) distinctiveness, or how the organization stands out to individuals; 3) transparency, which indicates how forthcoming an organization is about its activities; 4) consistency, or how clearly an organization presents itself time and time again; and 5) authenticity, which is the process of constructing a convincing identity, agreeing internally on how the organization’s identity will be expressed, and then expressing the organization’s identity clearly to others. This concept of authenticity reflects how the concept of organizational identity is discussed in this dissertation.

Identification, while often studied in conjunction with organizational identity, differs because it depends on a deeply integrated social process. Identification is the process in which organizations create a shared sense of collective reality, which Blake E. Ashforth and Fred Mael (2001) referred to as a “perception of oneness” (p. 20). For example, Janet M. Dukerich, Brian R. Golden, and Stephen M. Shortell (2002) discussed the role of perceived organizational identity, or the identity members of the organization believe to be true, for physicians in major health care systems. Results of focus group and survey measures indicated that if these physicians found the identity and image of their organizations to be attractive, they were more likely to identify with their organizations. This connection made them more-engaged members who interacted cooperatively within the organization and, in turn, reached out to external publics such as patients. A strong identification with the organization may keep members “attuned to
the future viability of the organization” (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994, p. 254), but an organizational identity does not necessarily depend upon identification in order to exist.

Organizational identity, however, can only be of use if it is understood and communicated (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The internal process of establishing an organizational identity begins when members of an organization create repetitive behavior patterns (Diamond, 1988). This process includes the use of symbols or social objects that create meaning and represent something that can be communicated to others. Symbols are used intentionally by those who understand what the symbols mean (Charon, 2007). The result is a perceived organizational identity, which members of the organization wish to project to publics, or the identity that is internally understood. Although an agreed-upon perceived identity may be crucial to organizational success, it is distinct from the projected organizational identity that is communicated to others through the organization’s efforts (Illia, et al., 2004).

Arriving at an agreed-upon organizational identity is challenging because leaders within the organization must be in sync with their employees. Randolph T. Barker and Martin R. Camarata (1998) discussed the role of organizations in creating this sense of collective reality, describing how organizational leaders may align their values with the values of their employees by establishing trust, commitment, and organizational support. Barker and Camarata discussed the power of being a learning organization—one that fosters an environment in which members understand organizational objectives, are continually motivated to develop new knowledge, and respond to environmental changes in a way that influences performance. These organizations understand who they are. Misalignment of values is also possible. As in Illia, et al.’s (2004) case study of a regulatory agency, the projected identity included three key roles of the organization: a referee, a service provider who is happy to help, and a center of competence. When surveyed,
however, employees did not agree that all three core concepts were present in their daily activities.

For the purposes of this dissertation, organizational identity is defined simply as an organization’s “distinctive character” (Aust, 2004, p. 523). Organizational identity is built around a complex communication process and tenuous cultural, environmental, and organizational changes. Researchers argue that organizational identity may be more dynamic and changing than it is static. Dennis A. Gioia, Majken Schultz, and Kevin C. Corley (2000) asserted that “an identity with a sense of continuity…is one that shifts in its interpretation and meaning while retaining labels for ‘core’ beliefs and values that extend over time and context” (p. 65). This “fluidity of identity” (p. 79) is what assists organizations in adapting to change, a topic that should be the focus of future identity research.

In summary, although initial organizational identity research focused more intently on the study of internal culture or visual symbols, researchers acknowledge the evolution of organizational identity to include additional aspects of organizational communication and interactive behavior (Diamond, 1993; Illia, et al., 2004; Rowden, 2004; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). In other words, the concept of organizational identity has evolved so that we may examine it within an issues management framework and as an important component in the public relations process.

**Organizational Identity and Public Relations**

There are many ways in which organizational identity facilitates a positive, two-way communication process in which the organization and publics have a mutually beneficial relationship. Organizational identity has been recognized as an emerging concept in public relations research (Balmer, 2002). Mark Rowden (2004) stated in his book, *Identity: Transforming Performance through Integrated Identity Management*, that identity creates an ongoing connection so
that publics can identify positively with the organization. According to Heath and Coombs (2006), organization-public relationships are built upon that connection through: 1) openness or two-way communication; 2) trustworthiness or evidence of reliability and dependability; 3) cooperation or the willingness to engage in collaboration; 4) alignment or the ability to mutually share a mission and goals; 5) compatibility of views or opinions; and 6) commitment to one another. Hence, they recognized the importance of ongoing adaptation to achieve all of these measures. Although early public relations practice was characterized as a purely asymmetrical process in which a dominant party sought to inform, influence, or manipulate an audience, scholarship now recognizes the additional effectiveness of a two-way model of cooperation, which also makes the public relations process a tool for negotiation or compromise between an organization and its publics (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, 2001).

This mutual adaptation “forms the essence of all interpersonal interaction” (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, p. 93), and organization-public relationships may be further negotiated through the successful communication of an organizational identity (Rowden, 2004). For example, organizational communication scholars George Cheney and Lars Thöger Christensen (2001) described organizational identity as way for organizations to put a face on issues. They also acknowledged that organizational identity and ongoing issues are often so interwoven that they cannot be separated. Their description of this interaction demonstrated the role of organizational identity in facilitating positive organization-public relationship.

Organizational identity itself is an issue for the organization—one that must be continuously evaluated and adapted in order to uphold an organization’s mission and goals, while also serving the needs of its publics. Organizations should strive to maintain a sense of “self” within the context of a “larger network” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 245). An example of this adaptation of the self is illustrated in Phillip Rosson and Mary R. Brooks’ (2004)
corporate identity work. Changes in corporate visual identity elements following mergers and acquisitions showed that identities were adapted to reflect various business decisions. In essence, when external or internal cultural shifts occur, the “self” of the organization must adapt. Nonprofit organizations are especially vulnerable to the cultural contexts in which they are situated; therefore adaptability is imperative. The next section details the role of organizational identity in nonprofit communication practices.

**Nonprofit Organizational Identity**

Because issues are the driving force behind nonprofit public communication efforts—and issues are constantly evolving—nonprofit organizations are challenged to present organizational identities that keep their issues at the front of the public agenda while also adapting to unstable social, economic, and political environments. For nonprofit or activist organizations, issues management may be an especially effective way to create “zones of meaning” for organizations and their publics. Communications scholar Robert L. Heath (1997) described zones of meaning as “the shared information and opinion that members of organizations understand and hold dear” (p. 192). Often, organizations may communicate about issues before publics have positions on such issues firmly fixed in their minds. Regardless of its timing, effective communication regarding important issues may create a sense of trust and foster shared beliefs between an organization and its publics.

Nonprofit organizations have the added challenge of distinguishing themselves in a sea of “do-gooders.” In an article published in a recent issue of *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Adrian Sargeant and John B. Ford (2007) describe how important it is for nonprofit organizations to establish unique brand personalities constructed through “personality traits that reflect the vision, mission, unique selling position, values, actions, and principles of the organization” (p. 43). The results of focus group and questionnaire research with hundreds of
London-based charity donors pointed to four ways in which European nonprofit organizations may set themselves apart from similar organizations. Sargeant and Ford contended that organizations should: 1) evoke a variety of emotions from donors; 2) present a “distinctive media voice” (p. 46); 3) offer an innovative or unique type of service; and 4) focus on tradition. The first two recommendations are of particular importance to issues management research. First, nonprofit communication efforts often tap into the emotional, rather than rational, minds of publics. Therefore, these kinds of organizations rely heavily on the symbolic identities of the issues they represent to create meaning for stakeholders (Heath, 1997; Lellis, 2006a, 2006b). Second, organizational identity is intertwined with the issues a nonprofit organization represents, and therefore organizational identities must also resonate with their publics to create long-term relationships with multiple publics (Bridges & Nelson, 2000). Presenting a distinctive voice through identity management may be one way to solidify these desired long-term relationships.

For example, Alison Henderson (2005) discussed the role of identity management for activist groups that used issues management concepts to influence public opinion and policy. Henderson discussed the role of language in shaping the controversial issue of genetic engineering (GE) and creating a shared meaning with publics. This research evaluated the GE Free campaign in New Zealand that several activist groups joined in an effort to “increase public awareness about genetic engineering, to encourage public demonstration against genetic engineering, to influence the government in favor of limiting genetic engineering to laboratory-based research, and to prevent the introduction of GE field trials” (p. 127). The coalition of activist groups encouraged action on the part of publics by providing extensive information via the Internet and conducting public meetings. Henderson’s critical interpretive analysis of campaign elements such as Web sites and press releases attributed the success of the campaign to the fact that activist groups understood the issue and used strategic tactics to successfully
foster positive relationships with publics. The success of the campaign was based on the fact that the coalition of groups effectively managed two distinct identities. The groups successfully used their voices to articulate the distinct economic and political identities central to New Zealand. Henderson contended that identity must be managed in a public relations and issues management context, with the creation of shared meaning with multiple publics being the ultimate goal.

In addition, Eleanor Brilliant and Dennis R. Young (2004) found that nonprofit organizations may have to manage multiple identities depending on the cultural context in which the organizations operate. Their analysis determined that federated community service organizations, or organizations that coordinate fundraising efforts, like the United Way, balanced four distinct identities as: 1) fiscal intermediaries whose primary role is to distribute funds among service organizations; 2) economic regulators whose roles are to ensure service organizations are using funds appropriately and pressure organizations that cannot perform to make adjustments; 3) community problem solvers whose role is to actively address community issues rather than just support the service organizations set up to do so; and 4) charitable mutual funds whose role is to manage individual investors and provide attractive offerings for donors. The organizational identity assumed by federated community service organizations ultimately took a different shape depending on the cultural context. Brilliant and Young argued that organizational identity “illuminates how nonprofit organizations sometimes struggle to ‘reinvent’ themselves in order to survive and prosper in a changing environment” (p. 26). They concluded that the strategic management of organizational identity may help organizations avoid “organizational schizophrenia” (p. 42) by presenting a consistent and reliable message to publics.

Also fundamental to Sargeant and Ford’s (2007) research is the emphasis on relationships with donors and other financial stakeholders—major publics for most nonprofit
organizations. A connection with these publics is imperative because nonprofit organizations depend on them to stay in business; these publics usually provide the bulk of financial backing for nonprofit institutions and their issues. All publics invested in the organization, however, – whether monetarily or not – are important to organizational stability. Peter Foreman and David A. Whetten’s (2002) work with rural cooperatives explored the concept of an identity gap between an organization and its invested members. Results of their survey with rural cooperative members indicated that “organizational identity congruence has a significant effect on member commitment” to the organization (p. 618).

Bridging any gaps in understanding between a nonprofit organization and its publics will make a major difference in the organizational longevity during both predictable and unpredictable cultural changes. When placing organizational identity within an issues management framework, the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism may help explain how identity is central to the successful organization-public relationship and how the relationship can influence an organization’s identity. This perspective is explained in the following section.

**The Role of Symbolic Interactionism**

Herbert Blumer (1969, 2004) and George Herbert Mead (1934), the major social science philosophers who are credited with first exploring symbolic interactionism as a theory, believed that humans relate with objects and people in their environments (see also Schwandt, 2001). The premise of symbolic interactionism is that people ascribe meaning to symbols, or social objects, which are used to communicate with intention. A process of interactive communication influences how humans think about a phenomenon – or an observed experience (Hewitt, 2000; McCall & Becker, 1990) – and how shared meaning is created. Thus, meaning is derived from a stimuli and response cycle; one person is prompted by the communication efforts of another
person and reacts to those efforts, which sets the stage for another communication effort and response, and so forth (Blumer, 2004). This cycle allows messages to be created, altered, and reaffirmed through patterns of ongoing and reciprocal individual communication (Charon, 2007), and can be applied as well to organizational processes. Although a variety of theoretical positions exist on the exact nature of the relationship between discourse and organization, it is generally agreed upon that organizations function in a relationship with communication processes (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).

These processes may lead to an organizational identity—one that can be viewed through an interpretive lens (Gioia, 1998). Both internal and external publics create and interpret patterns of communication that socially construct the identity of an organization. To achieve ultimate stability, organizations must have a distinct sense of what they intend to communicate to others about their identities (i.e., their perceived identities) and what is actually communicated (i.e., their projected identities). Dialogue assists organizations and publics in co-creating an understood meaning, which reflects the rhetorical function of public relations, to “seek the highest standards in the form, substance, privilege, and product of discourse” (Heath, 2001, p. 37).

Creating shared meaning can be difficult if there are underlying differences between the views, positions, or perspectives of an organization and its publics, or more crucially, when inconsistencies are evident within organizational membership. For example, Gary Rudd’s (2000) ethnographic work with a regional symphony revealed the expression of two competing cultural codes, or ideologies, within the organization. The first was an artistic code, meaning that organizational decisions should be based largely on: 1) how they will affect the quality of symphony performances; and 2) the influence of performance on the spiritual and emotional fulfillment of the community. The second code was a business code, which indicated the importance of the symphony in operating like a business and making decisions based on the
bottom line rather than artistic aspirations. These codes, similar to a set of unwritten rules, dictated how members of the organization interacted professionally. Rudd revealed through his research the presence of a significant symbolic tension between the two ideologies. Each code had its own voice, and the codes were negotiated continuously through interpersonal interaction among members. Rudd’s interpretive analysis of the language used in this interaction allowed the competing codes, or underlying identities of the organization, to surface.

Symbolic interactionism may be fundamental to the development of organizational identity. Gideon Sjoberg, Elizabeth A. Gill, and Joo Ean Tan (2003) contended that organizations “have a reality apart from their [human] agents” (p. 417) and can develop a higher-level “social mind” that “emerges within the context of interaction” (p. 429). Communication scholars Kevin D. Vryan, Patricia A. Adler, and Peter Adler (2003) acknowledged the importance of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical foundation for identity research, and emphasized the importance of “changing social realities” in shaping how identity is created, sustained, or altered (p. 387). Similarly, research by mass communication scholars illustrates how organizational identity is socially constructed. For example, Rosson and Brooks (2004) operationalized corporate visual identity as a combination of the elements that carry out the mission of the organization, create awareness, and prompt recognition of the organization. Publics interact with these elements in order to understand the organization. Alessandri (2001) also described the visual elements of corporate identity as elements with which publics interact. For example, publics may have positive or negative reactions to the aesthetics of a company logo, which then creates a set of ideas that may influence how the corporation’s identity is understood.

Organizational identity should motivate an organization’s publics to act, whether it’s to invest time or money in the company or cause. A clear presentation of identity is important to
three stages of the organization-public relationship. First, there are antecedents to building relationships, which include the social and cultural norms associated with the current environmental context. Organizations and publics must initially understand how they influence one another. Second, there is a process of communication designed to maintain organization-public relationships through cooperation and collaborative efforts. Legitimacy is established and ongoing interaction creates a stable and mutually beneficial platform for the relationship. Third, there are relationship outcomes, or goals that are attained (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000). Goals may include trust, satisfaction, commitment, and organizational stability. If publics feel connected to the organization’s identity throughout the communication process, positive outcomes are more attainable.

Bridging gaps between the organization and its publics successfully may significantly influence the stability of the organization. Thus, organizational identity is a concept worthy of in-depth study in public relations research, regardless of the multiple ways in which it can be conceptualized. The problem is, how does one go about studying such a complex topic? The following section examines literature that employed values measurement as a means of ascertaining organizational identity.

**Measuring Organizational Identity through Values**

An organization’s distinctive character may be observed through values (Rowden, 2004), because values are the “essence of the organization” (Aust, 2004, p. 516). Similar to other concepts described in this dissertation, such as identity and symbolic interactionsim, values scholarship is rooted in the study of individuals. Milton Rokeach (1969, 1973, 1979) is cited by Janice Beyer and Stephen Lutze (1993) as being one of the most-important contributors to values scholarship because he conceptualized specific human values that other researchers have been able to apply to the study of group values. Rokeach (1973) described a value as “a
conception of something that is personally or socially preferable” (p. 10). Values, however, should not be confused with beliefs and attitudes. A person has more beliefs than he does values. Although all beliefs are precursors to some type of action, a person’s most-fundamental – or core – beliefs comprise an individual set of values. Rokeach (1968) defined attitudes as clusters of beliefs, “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation” (p. 112). Values are viewed as more “dynamic and motivating” than attitudes (Aust, 2004, p. 522).

Rokeach (1968, 1973, 1979) proposed that a limited number of human values create a foundation for individual decision making and action. Values are functional, he said, because they serve as “standards that guide ongoing activities” (Rokeach, 1973, p. 12). Value systems, or combinations of values arranged in a hierarchy, are “employed to resolve conflicts and to make decisions” (p. 12). Rokeach examined two types of human values that interact: instrumental and terminal values. Instrumental values drive the individual decision-making process and day-to-day behavior, and terminal values are the values a person aspires to or desires. Examples of instrumental values include independence, helpfulness, intellect, and ambition, which resemble desired human characteristics. Terminal values focus less on individual characteristics and more on the desire to experience end-states, such as a comfortable life, a world at peace, inner harmony, and social recognition.

Rokeach’s (1968) Value Theory also proposed that values exist within organizations, and organizations actively communicate these values to others – both internally and externally – through a variety of messages and symbols. Research and commentary in organizational communication and public relations support these assumptions. Values are often discussed as driving forces behind organizational strategic planning, because they define the organization, set the terms for organizational culture, and influence patterns of organizational behavior. For example, in an article published in *The Public Manager*, Mark A. Tannenbaum (2003) discussed the
importance of aligning the core values of an organization, which are the more enduring, long-
term values, with the operating values of an organization, which guide the decision-making
process. Tannenbaum posited that alignment “determines the overall health and success of an
organization,” and results in a “high level of trust within the organization” (p. 20).

Communication scholars Denise M. Bostdorff and Stephen L. Vibbert also related values
specifically to the public relations process, and suggested that the successful communication of
values may lead to positive relationship outcomes. The process could have multiple roles—
influencing how publics view an organization, deflecting criticism of an organization, and
“lay[ing] the groundwork for later persuasive efforts” such as policy changes (p. 153). Bostdorff
and Vibbert linked values research more specifically to advocacy and issues management in their
description of the lawsuit crisis. In 1986, the Insurance Information Institute (III) issued a series
of issue advertisements to convince Americans of the growing problem of frivolous lawsuits.
Bostdorff and Vibbert described the event as a “strategic and multifaceted rhetorical attempt to
argue for the acceptance of one value set over another” (p. 104). The III was successful in
communicating a core set of values that engaged its publics, which illustrated the power of using
values to communicate organizational objectives to important publics.

Several studies have applied values-based research to organizational identity. For
example, studies have examined the relationship or congruence between employee values and
values set by organizational founders (Morely & Shockley-Zalaback, 1991), how values structures
dictated response to organizational changes (Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995), and how
shared or competing values affected an organization’s ability to manage day-to-day operations or
influenced long-term business outcomes (Buenger, Daft, Conlon, & Austin, 1996; McDonald &
Gandz, 1992). These studies took “what makes an organization an organization” and described
how specific values not only defined the organizational identities, but also influenced organizational processes.

Values are communicated through language. According to communications scholar John C. Meyer (1995), personal narratives “illuminate an organization’s values” (p. 219). Meyer interviewed organizational members of the Community Children’s Center and, by examining the language used, he identified 10 distinct values embedded in the culture of the organization. The three most-communicated values were consideration, or that members should show concerns for the feelings of others; organization/planning, or that members should plan in advance; and timely information, or that members should communicate as “quickly or as appropriately as possible” (p. 215).

Communication scholar Mina A. Vaughn (1997) used qualitative analysis to examine corporate discourse about employee recruitment and retention used in organizational documents such as employee handbooks, advertisements, and newsletters, and interviewed human resource/personnel directors. Strategies to promote organization-member identification were similar among organizations in this study and clustered around five identified organizational values—innovation, quality, equality, individualism, and teamwork. Although the study was not designed to explicitly measure organizational identity, Vaughn connected values to identity by describing how values served to create an environment conducive to organizational identification. Results indicated that the five observed values “function independently, to some degree, to communicate managerial philosophy, beliefs about accomplishing tasks, the rationale for decision-making policy, and other information that will socialize members to align themselves with organizational goals and objectives” (p. 133). Additionally, Vaughn discussed the importance conducting further theoretically-based values research that will help
organizations “better understand their various publics, and better understand themselves, as well” (p. 135).

In his doctoral dissertation work, organizational communication scholar Phillip J. Aust (2000) tested a specific method for measuring organizational identity by examining communicated values used by the United Church of God. Using Rokeach’s (1968, 1973) list of instrumental and terminal values, Aust (2004) created a quantitative measure for assessing the organization’s identity. He conducted a computer-assisted content analysis of organizational documents produced by the United Church of God to assess its organizational identity over a five-year span. His results indicated that the United Church of God possessed a distinct identity defined by five communicated values: family security, helpfulness, ambition, obedience, and mature love. Aust also concluded that the United Church of God had a strong and consistent organizational identity that it developed and expressed consistently over time. The United Church of God can “recognize how it is already perceived and then shape that identity…reiterating to those who are responsible for constructing and transmitting its external messages, especially through the media, that they form a collective voice by which the organization is known” (p. 530).

Summary

The literature reviewed indicates that what an organization believes or upholds – the characteristics that make it distinctive – is a representation of its identity. That is, values may be what make an organization an organization, and organizations need discourse – or voices – to express these values. The literature shows that long-term issues can be successfully sustained when an organization’s identity is communicated clearly within an evolving environment and among changing publics. Organizations have voices to communicate the values they aspire to uphold in the same way individuals do. These voices provide organizations with a unique way of
expressing themselves. Therefore, an organization’s identity allows its voice to be heard, understood, and distinguished from other voices, despite the ever-changing culture.

Research to date has examined organizational identity for individual organizations. Little research demonstrates how collective groups of organizations express underlying similarities or differences in their identities, although Brilliant and Young’s (2004) work with federated community service organizations, Foreman and Whetten’s (2002) work with rural cooperatives, and Vaughn’s (1997) work with high technology industries serve as starting points. The need for multiple organizations to communicate with publics may come from underlying – and often shared – ideas, values, or voices. The following chapter provides background on disability-related communication to date and a rationale for examining the organizational identities of disability-related nonprofit organizations.
Chapter 3: Background and the Current Role of Disability Communication

The role of persons with disabilities in American society is a continuously evolving issue. Persons with disabilities have battled issues surrounding isolation, integration, and acceptance. In the 20th century, societal changes have focused on equal opportunity, nondiscrimination policies, and the acknowledgement that people with disabilities have often been excluded from society and viewed as individuals who are different or somehow isolated (Bryan, 1997; Charlton, 1998). The disability community has faced an uphill battle for complete understanding and acceptance, and scholars continue to argue that the full integration of persons with disabilities as an accepted segment of society may still be viewed as an ongoing struggle (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Charlton, 1998; McColl & Bickenbach, 1998). According to disability scholar Simi Linton (1998), how we think, talk, and feel about persons with disabilities will greatly affect how the concept of disability is shaped. Disability is not simply something “material and concrete” (p. 10) such as a disease or injury. Rather, Linton argued, the notion of disability is “a linchpin in a complex web of social ideals, institutional structures, and government policies” (p. 10).

Nonprofit organizations that serve people with disabilities tackle this complex web in daily communication activities (Conyers, et al., 1999; Heck, 2005). In addition to providing supports and services, disability-related nonprofit organizations often work to evoke positive changes in how disability as a social concept is viewed. Activists would argue that disability not only affects a large portion of our population, but that persons with disabilities are often no different from others in their typical aspirations, desires, and many aspects of daily living. Nonprofit organizations have opportunities to communicate about the significance of chronic
health issues facing our society and the importance of recognizing the role of disability in modern life.

This chapter sets the foundation for examining the identities of disability-related nonprofit organizations through communicated values research, and presents a conceptual framework for the study of disability-related communication within an issues management context. This chapter begins with a definition of disability that serves the purposes of this dissertation and then reviews the history of the disability movement, which has influenced how disability issues are discussed in the public sphere. This chapter also details how the concept of disability has been shaped by both mediated and non-mediated communication efforts, and emphasizes the role of disability-related nonprofit organizations in the communication process. It concludes with an overview of framing as a way of presenting disability issues. The literature and research to date comes from a variety of disciplines, including disability studies, sociology, political science, and mass communication.

Defining Disability

Many people think of disabilities as the illnesses or injuries that create physical challenges, when, in truth, a disability is defined more broadly to encompass anything from cancer to mental illness to spinal injury (Falvo, 1999). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, an estimated 12.5% of the American population over the age of five is affected by a sensory, physical, mental, or self-care disability (“Selected types,” 2004). The figure “most often kicked around by activists” is an estimated 54 million Americans (Riley, 2005, p. 15), or around one-sixth of the current U.S. population, which is slightly higher than the Census Bureau estimate. In 1980 the World Health Organization (WHO) set the standard for the seemingly interchangeable terms “impairment,” “disability,” and “handicap.” According to WHO, the term “impairment” refers to a medical condition or deficit in how the body functions. A “disability” is the limitation that results from
an impairment, and a “handicap” is the societal disadvantage a disability creates (Falvo, 1999). The difference between the term “disability” and handicap” is an important distinction. A disability imposes some kind of limitation, whereas a handicap implies that the person is at a disadvantage within society.

Not all scholars support WHO’s broad definition. Sociologists Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer (2003) attributed disability activists’ mixed or negative reactions to WHO’s definition to the fact that WHO’s definition implies that persons with disabilities are socialized into a “dependent role and identity” (p. 15). For the purposes of this dissertation, however, WHO’s definition of disability is acceptable. All U.S. citizens rely on external sources of information or resources to address their own limitations on a daily basis; such reliance may not necessarily imply dependence. In other words, the average citizen cannot navigate a culture or society on a daily basis without some form of direction from others. For this dissertation, disability is defined as an impairment that is chronic rather than acute. That is, a disability is “of long duration” or “continuing,” according to the New Heritage Dictionary (“chronic,” 2007a), or “habitual…recurring frequently” (“chronic,” 2007b) as defined by dictionary.com. In summary, this dissertation acknowledges that there is a broad definition of what it means to have a disability. In addition, many groups, such as the disability community, health care providers, nonprofit organizations, government institutions, educators, and scholars have vested interests in refining the conception of disability and disability as a public issue.

A comprehensive definition of disability, however, should not neglect the notion of societal barriers and social construction. Disability may be the “result of social attitudes and architectural, legal, and educational barriers that confront people with chronic or permanent medical explanations for typicality” (Depoy & Gilson, 2004, p. 40-41). Disability researchers purport that societal barriers may be present because of the inabilities of others to adapt to
persons with disabilities. In other words, to have a disability is also to experience some level of difficulty functioning or interacting within a particular cultural environment, and the context in which disability is situated influences how disability is defined and perceived by others (Clogston, 1993; McColl & Bickenbach, 1998). Acknowledging the societal influences on the definition of disability is integral to accurately observing and understanding how organizations choose to communicate about it. This process cannot be understood without first detailing the plight of persons with disabilities and their efforts to achieve equality in American culture.

The Disability Movement

Advocacy for persons with disabilities began around the turn of the 20th century, but it was not until the 1960s that persons with disabilities initiated a stronger and more-public movement to express their concerns as an oppressed minority. Disability-related discrimination, according to David Johnstone (2001), is “institutionalised in the structures of society” (p. 43). Legislation throughout the 20th century for persons with disabilities focused on opportunities in many areas: vocational education, basic and special education, professional training and continuing education, vocation and rehabilitation, medical rehabilitation, employment, economic assistance, deinstitutionalization and independent living, accessibility and technology, and civil rights and advocacy (Bryan, 2002; Depoy & Gilson, 2004; Johnstone, 2001).

The fight against discrimination and for equal opportunities and access continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was one of the most-important forms of legislation to create opportunities for persons with disabilities (Stroman, 2003). This legislation addressed affirmative action and non-discrimination employment provisions as well as building and transportation accessibility for federally funded organizations and those who receive federal contracts (“Definitions,” 2000). Conveying disability rights as civil rights during this time was, however, difficult for activists; therefore, overall
changes in attitude and behavior toward persons with disabilities on a societal level were not pronounced (Fleischer, & Zames, 2001).

After a decade of planning and protests, including a rally on the steps of the Capitol, the disability movement culminated in the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by President George H. W. Bush in 1990. ADA legislation consists of five titles related to a variety of disability issues: employment, public services, public accommodations and services operated by private entities, telecommunication relay, and other miscellaneous services (Bryan, 2002; Holmes 1990; Johnstone, 2001). Willie V. Bryan (2002) referred to the ADA as the “Civil Rights Act for persons with disabilities” (p. 150; see also Holmes, 1990), because this legislation is often acknowledged by disability activists the “farthest reaching and most influential law [for the disability movement] enacted to date” (p. 175). For one, the ADA broadened the legal definition of disability to include any individual with “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities…, [or] a record of such an impairment, or [who is] regarded as having such an impairment” (“Equal opportunity,” 2000). Other important pronouncements about the disability community were recognized by Congress when the legislation was passed, which included the acknowledgement of societal trends such as isolation and segregation of people with disabilities, discriminatory practices, and a lack of status and power afforded to those with disabilities (Bryan, 2002).

Many publics did not recognize the passage of the ADA as an important moment in disability civil rights history. Journalist Joseph Shapiro (1994) argued that this lack of recognition is because the passage and promise of the ADA was not covered significantly in the media. He proposed that in contrast to the pivotal role the media played in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, disability activist groups who lobbied for the passage of the ADA held the belief that media coverage would be counterproductive to their cause. Activist groups feared that coverage would
perpetuate disability stereotypes rather than dispel them; hence, information conveyed to the media was limited, thereby limiting the coverage disability issues received.

Shapiro (1994) and disability media scholar Michael R. Smith (1991) argued that, during the early 1990s, average citizens had little knowledge of the rights for people with disabilities. Historical reviews of disability policy and change indicated that persons with disabilities still experienced widespread discrimination, even after the passage of the ADA (Pfeiffer, 1993). In a recent article published in *Paraplegia News*, Robert Herman (2004) cited the lack of understanding of the ADA as one cause of ongoing pessimistic attitudes about the ability of the legislation to change the lives of persons with disabilities. This possible connection exemplifies the notion that clear and consistent communication efforts may better shape how disability issues are perceived. The next sections demonstrate the role of both mediated and non-mediated communication in addressing disability issues, and review the literature to date.

**Understanding Disability through Communication**

Many people have no personal contact with people with disabilities. Therefore, the average person obtains information about disability by means other than interpersonal interaction, typically via mass communication, including both mediated and non-mediated efforts. The media have specifically been identified as key players in the transmission of information and ideas about social problems (Paisley, 2001), and advocacy efforts are crucial to spreading disability awareness (Johnstone, 2001). The literature on the role of the media in communicating about disability, however, is controversial. For example, although attitudes and barriers may intensify the issue of disability for individuals with disabilities and their advocates, media coverage is often cited as both helpful and a hindrance to the efforts of the disability movement. In a commentary regarding European television programs to be released in the 1990s, Daphne Gloag and Sara Davies (1992) questioned the use of disability-centered content
as the means to increase insight into the lives of this “special” group. Their article published in the *British Medical Journal* pointed out that although presenting persons with disabilities in the media may create a profound opportunity to address society’s lack of awareness surrounding disability issues, portrayals of persons with disabilities as being unique, different, or separate from able-bodied counterparts may inadvertently further alienate the group from mainstream society. Gloag and Davies (1992) stated, “Perhaps in the future disabled people will be portrayed as individuals who just happen to have disabilities” (p.785).

Similar debates on the pros and cons of disability media coverage are present in American commentary and scholarship, as mass media “act as significant agents in socially constructing images of people with disabilities and disability issues in U.S. culture” (Haller, 2000b, p. 284). Most researchers believe the advantages of keeping disability on the media agenda outweigh the disadvantages because media can keep disability issues more visible in the public sphere. For example, disability activist and scholar Jack A. Nelson (2000) said that the media have an *obligation* to shape the evolving views of disability and the disability community. He cited the advantages of media involvement as being two-fold: 1) media coverage of persons with disabilities creates a sense of community for a vast number of Americans living with disabilities, and 2) media coverage encourages active discussion of disability issues that can influence levels of public awareness and understanding. On the other hand, Charles A. Riley, II (2005) claimed that disability media coverage – including print, advertising, television, and film – has not evolved in a way that is helpful to the disability movement. According to Riley, coverage continues to isolate persons with disabilities, thereby limiting public discussion and understanding and confining images of disability to old ideas. In his book *Disability & the Media: Prescriptions for Change*, Riley wrote that persons with disabilities:
are shamefully misrepresented in the fun-house mirror of the mass media. Consigned by the arbiters of what is published or produced to a narrow spectrum of roles, from freaks to inspirational saints, lab rats or objects of pity, people with disabilities have not seen the evolution in their public image that their private circumstances have undergone in the aftermath of political and medical progress over the past four decades. Even the specialized publications, programs, and films dedicated to people with disabilities (and sometimes run by them) present such twisted images that one wonders what bizarre trick is being played on the “last minority” which lags decades behind other groups – gays, blacks, Jews, women, seniors…(p.1).

Riley described the desire activists have always had, which is to “abandon…the old view of people with disabilities as ‘abnormal”’ (p. 7).

In general, the American public responds to two media models of disability – medical and social – as described by media scholar John S. Clogston (1989). Clogston attributed the roots of the medical model to the disability-related work of John Gliedman and William Roth (1980) and deviance theory (Becker, 1963), in which deviance is identified as a departure from societal standards or norms. According to Clogston, the medical model “emphasizes the individual’s physical functioning and may be the most common conception [of disability]” (p. 5). People with disabilities are often viewed as members of society under the care of a medical professional, i.e., they have different needs than their able-bodied counterparts. Sociologist Tim Davies (1994) described the medical model by stating that the degree of impairment is actually what determines the degree of disability.

Clogston’s (1989) social model of disability, more-commonly used and also referred to as the social pathology model, presented individuals with disabilities as somehow “out of step with the rest of society” (p. 6). Davies (1994) described the social model of disability as one that takes into account how disability is shaped by factors over which a person has no control such as social, environmental, or organizational factors. Examples might be the manner in which institutions are set up to serve persons with disabilities, the fundamental beliefs that others have about persons with disabilities, and ascribed cultural norms. Although the social model often
implies a negative connotation – that people with disabilities are at a disadvantage – it is acknowledged as a broader and more-realistic model than the medical model. Davies believed that people with disabilities may be “disabled by society,” rather than their diagnosed medical issues (p. 17).

Disability scholarship outside the U.S. also recognizes the complexity of disability models that dictate public understanding of disability. For example, Barnes and Mercer (2003) described how disability is interpreted in Britain. The models they presented also incorporate social factors in explaining how ideas about disability are communicated. For example, socio-political models portray disability as a concept that is grounded in societal factors and public policy changes. A bio-psychological model recognizes the medical aspects of disability, but also takes into consideration individual experiences with environmental factors that are both “material and social” (p. 15).

Although models that root disability in a social process may be more realistic, these models demonstrate the tenuous relationship between individuals with disabilities and their social environments. For example, Li Li and Dennis Moore (1998) conducted a survey of 1,266 persons with disabilities, and found a relationship between high levels of perceived discrimination and low levels of respondents’ own acceptance of their disabilities. This study demonstrated the possible negative effects of a socially constructed view of disability on the disability community. This argument does not imply that positive outcomes related to a socially constructed view of disability are impossible, but that communication about disability issues has a long way to go to improve the social context in which it is situated. The following sections review commentary and research in three areas – news media, advertising, and public communication – showing how each shape the conception of disability and disability issues.
The Role of News Media

In 1990, Howard Margolis, Arthur Shapiro, and Philip M. Anderson published an article in Social Education that examined the role journalists had in perpetuating stereotypes by using certain language in disability coverage. For example, the use of words such as “victim” or “cripple” in stories about persons with disabilities may evoke pity instead of respect, and may set the overall tone for what it means to have a disability. Often persons with disabilities become victims who “can’t do” rather than “can do” (p. 28). In 1991, Michael R. Smith made the statement that “newspapers must be the engine to fuel change for the disabled” (p. 40). More recently, Suzanne Levine (2000) explained, however, how persons with disabilities are often described in news coverage as being somehow separate from mainstream society; her commentary described the ongoing and evolving battle for accurate representations in news media. In a commentary published in Quill magazine, mass communication scholar Jeff South (2003) reviewed the tradition of persons with disabilities being portrayed in news media as objects of inspiration or pity, and urged journalism educators not only to encourage persons with disabilities to pursue careers in journalism, but also to educate those without disabilities about how to accurately capture the disability story. Some efforts have been made to address problems with disability media coverage as part of journalism training (see Johnson & Elkins, 1989; Levine, 2000).

In general, there are two types of news media coverage related to disability: traditional and progressive. Clogston (1993) labeled media coverage that emphasizes an outdated social understanding of disability issues as traditional. This type of coverage generally focuses on topics such as medical treatments related to disability, government or private support of disability issues, special education or separate employment or school programs, and the person with a disability as a victim of crime. Progressive media coverage emphasizes more relevant and current
social influences on disability, and focuses on how our society has yet to adapt to those with disabilities. Topics said to be progressive include access and disability awareness, discrimination, independent living and integrated programming, employment issues, consumer issues, and stories in which a person with a disability is the focus of the story, but the disability itself is not the focus of the story.

In the 1990s, Clogston (1990, 1991, 1993) and disability media scholar Beth Haller (1995, 2000b) used their research efforts to specify eight distinct models of disability news coverage. Clogston is given credit for the first five models. Traditional models are: 1) the medical model in which persons with disability are portrayed as having an impairment; 2) the social pathology model in which persons with disabilities are portrayed as being different from others or disadvantaged because of disabilities; and 3) the supercrip model in which persons with disabilities are portrayed as having overcome their disabilities. The supercrip model is commonly used—people with disabilities are often described as accomplishing something despite having a disability. Specific progressive media models are: 1) a minority/civil rights model in which persons with disabilities are portrayed as having legitimate civil rights grievances; and 2) a cultural pluralism model that focuses on the various aspects of persons with disabilities. In the cultural pluralism model, disability is not the main focus of news coverage, but only one aspect of a person covered in the story. The fact that a person has a disability is secondary to the reason the story is being covered (Clogston, 1991). Haller’s (1995) research expanded Clogston’s typology, and defined three more common post-ADA disability news coverage models: 1) a business model, in which persons with disabilities are viewed as a costly burden to businesses that must make changes in accessibility or hiring practices; 2) a legal model, in which persons with disabilities are portrayed as a population being discriminated against; and 3) a consumer model, in which persons with disabilities are viewed as a neglected consumer group.
Much research that explores the use of traditional and progressive models in news coverage centers around coverage during the early 1990s when the ADA was passed and implemented. For example, Clogston (1990) reviewed coverage in 16 major American newspapers during 1989 and 1990 and found that although there was some progressive coverage of disability issues such as equal access to public facilities, consumer issues, and civil rights, news portrayals of disability were still limited to more-traditional topics such as the medical aspects of disability or the victimization faced by those with disabilities. He also conducted a longitudinal study of news coverage that centered on major acts of legislation from 1976 to 1991. Results indicated a subtle transition from traditional to progressive models of disability portrayals, but suggested the media as a whole still held on to the more-traditional depiction of disability (Clogston, 1993).

Haller (2000a) reviewed ADA coverage between 1988 and 1993 and found that the limited news coverage was also narrow in theme. For example, the portrayal of a person with a disability as a white man in a wheelchair was common. She concluded that media fell short in including a more-accurate and encompassing depiction of disability that meets the broad definition as explained in ADA legislation (Haller, 2000a, 2000b). Although Haller’s (2000b) ongoing research indicated movement toward more-progressive stories, she concluded, “there must be more awareness and creativity when telling the news of disability issues” (p. 285).

The language used in coverage may shape how people understand disability issues. Beth Haller, Bruce Dorries, and Jessica Rahn (2006) explored disability language used by journalists during ADA coverage and how this language shaped perception and pushed the disability movement forward. Choice of language was often noted as being helpful to the disability movement. Examples cited by authors include the elimination of the word “handicap” and the use of the phrase “people with disabilities” which puts “people” before “disability.” However,
researchers determined that some language used was still limiting or stereotypical. For example, use of the terms that emphasize a dependent role, such as “the disabled,” “wheelchair bound,” and “confined by a wheelchair,” increased.

In an article published on the National Public Radio Web site that discussed portrayals of mental retardation, Shapiro (2007) stated that “minority groups often object to, and then change the words that are used to describe them” so that publics can more accurately understand that a disability does not necessarily define a negative aspect of a person’s identity (¶ 1). According to Levine (2000), however, activists would like to see a more-rapid evolution of disability news coverage from traditional to progressive, and continue to encourage one another to take steps to influence the media in this direction.

In summary, researchers recognize that disability news coverage is limited in scope. The next section discusses the role of advertising in communicating about disability.

**The Role of Advertising**

Disability-related media research has also focused on how advertising has shaped public perception of disability issues and the use of persons with disabilities in advertising campaigns. Advertising may assist publics in making sense of current ideas on the public agenda, serve as a medium for communicating what is currently acceptable in our society, and shape or reaffirm individual beliefs (Hackley, 2005). Advertising, however, may also present a distorted view of reality, and researchers have not been surprised that portrayals of disability in advertising have been few and far between, and even more limited and stereotyping than those in news media (Farnall, 2000; Riley, 2005).

Traditionally, persons with disabilities often appear in advertising when the focus is on the disability and the obligation society has to help persons with disabilities; i.e., charity advertising (“Advertising,” 1993; Farnall, 2000; Riley, 2005). According to Beth Haller and Sue
Ralph (2001), “In the US, charity advertising was a separate entity from commercial advertising and included programs such as telethons and promotional ads from ‘helping’ societies such as Easter Seals, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and Paralyzed Veterans of America” (¶ 12). The portrayals of persons with disabilities in charity advertising has been a topic of discussion among researchers, especially in countries other than the United States. For example, Janet E. Stockdale (1995) examined the persuasive value of using emotionally laden imagery of disability in advertising in 10 European issue-focused posters used by charities in the 1990s. Although portrayals may have evoked feelings of pride or empowerment, negative, pity-focused portrayals were also common. She ascertained that, “the idea of neutral information is illusionary” (p. 31). She concluded that poster campaigns could help or hinder efforts on the part of the disability community, depending on how persons with disabilities are represented. An article in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal (“Advertising,” 1993), contended that medical charities often offend potential donors because “shocking or dramatic” images – for example, photographs of very sick children – of disability were common (p. 1187). Persons with disabilities being portrayed as people in need of help conform to the medical model of disability (Clogston, 1989) and relate to the traditional news media models (Clogston, 1993) discussed in the previous section.

The appearance of persons with disabilities in mainstream advertisements has been minimal. For example, advertising and mass communication scholars Dennis J. Ganahl and Mark Arbuckle (2001) conducted a content analysis of nearly 3,000 television advertisements aired in 1998 and 1999 and found that persons with disabilities were virtually absent from television advertising. They also found that when persons with disabilities were represented in advertising, the disability community was not necessarily accurately portrayed, or persons with disabilities often appeared alienated from their able-bodied counterparts. Marie Hardin (2003) found individuals in the disability community who agreed with this notion of misrepresentation.
In a qualitative study on disability portrayals in advertising, athletes with disabilities reported that they did not pay much attention to the use of persons with disabilities in advertising because they felt portrayals were not realistic or indicative of how they live their lives. Participants were, however, acutely aware of any portrayals that provided positive representations of being included – but not singled out – in advertising. Participants noted that inclusion is an “indicator of their social status” as participating members of society (¶ 58).

The use of persons with disabilities in advertising may be progressing somewhat now that advertisers are recognizing the power of persons with disabilities as a consumer group (Riley, 2005). In addition, Beth Haller and Sue Ralph’s (2006) research pointed to evidence that the use of persons with disabilities in ads may evolve in a positive way for the disability community, perpetuating more positive portrayals of disability as being a part of our culture. They analyzed recent advertisements that featured people with disabilities, and found more themes of empowerment and pride or inclusion than previous studies indicated. An example of an advertisement that Haller and Ralph used to illustrate empowerment was a Cingular Wireless commercial aired during the 2001 Super Bowl. The advertisement featured artist Dan Keplinger (a.k.a. the subject of the Academy Award-winning documentary “King Gimp”), who has a severe form of cerebral palsy. The television piece confronted the “audience’s mistaken impression of Keplinger and his abilities,” and thereby constructed an “alternate belief system” for non-disabled viewers that disability is not a “pitiable millstone hanging around someone’s neck” (¶12). Haller and Ralph noted the fine line, however, between empowerment and the common supercrip message (Clogston, 1991). They indicated that a view of Keplinger as a successful artist despite his disability would be considered a negative portrayal, and this view was one that had the potential to be communicated.
In a speech by the Director of the European Association for Communication Associations, Dominic Lyle (2003) reminded attendees at a Media and Disability Conference that disability is neither shocking nor dramatic. Rather, he said, it is a normal and substantial part of society. Lyle proposed that the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream creative work is important because it reminds publics how common disability issues are; these issues are not isolated, nor isolating, problems.

Advertising is designed to market and sell an idea to audiences, using persuasive techniques in paid media (Hackley, 2005). Another method of persuasion is via public communication campaigns.

**The Role of Public Communication**

Public communication efforts seek to persuade audiences (Pfau & Parrott, 1993), but differ from advertisements in that the focus of a public communication campaign recognizes the active role publics have in shaping the perceptions of issues (Heath & Coombs, 2006; Paisley, 2001). William Paisley (2001) argued that public communication efforts can be powerful because they may encourage reform and place important societal issues on the public agenda. For example, Arvind Sihghal and Everett M. Rogers (2003) discussed the importance of public communication in dispelling myths about HIV/AIDS worldwide. They acknowledged stigma as “one of the major barriers to effective communication about AIDS,” and public communication as a means to “help break the silence about AIDS, and move the discussion of HIV/AIDS from the personal-private to the public-policy sphere, thus overcoming taboo-ness” (p. 285).

Organizations serve as primary message channels for information (Stephens, Rimal, & Flora, 2004), and researchers recognize the power in proper communication and effective rhetoric on the part of organizations in shaping public opinion. For example, communication scholar Julie L. Andsanger (2000) reviewed the rhetoric used by activist groups in the abortion
debate by examining press releases and speeches subsequent to media coverage. She found that communication tools greatly influenced how journalists portrayed the stories in their coverage, because the competing groups – pro-life and pro-choice – used specific rhetorical patterns of communication to influence how the issue was covered. Results of a content analysis revealed that while competing media frames existed in news coverage, more coverage was given to the pro-life side when the debate centered around the sensitive topic of late-term abortion. Andsanger contended that the more-dominant news coverage given to the pro-life side of the story may have occurred because pro-life groups focused on the emotional value of pro-life rhetoric.

Strategic implementation of public relations tactics is important to the successful public communication campaign. Activist groups and nonprofit organizations currently use public relations strategies to influence a variety of publics. Public relations campaigns are said to be “driven by reform efforts, actions that seek to make life or society or both better, as defined by emerging social values” (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 2001, p. 232). For example, messages must strategically align organizational interests with social values to draw multiple publics into the debate. Andsanger’s (2000) research on the abortion issue highlighted the importance of presenting a carefully constructed message that has audience appeal.

Informative and persuasive nonprofit communication efforts may educate or influence publics about the importance of disability issues. The “creative work” that Lyle (2003) referred to when he discussed advertising can be a substantial part of public communication as well. Organizations must consider interesting ways to present their messages to publics, whether directly or through traditional media. For example, Alec Stone (2001), the director of government affairs at the National Campaign for Hearing Health wrote in *Campaigns & Elections* about the campaign efforts of the Deafness Research Foundation. The main goals of the
organization were to provide immediate information about hearing health and initiate consumer advocacy, but the organization took the campaign one step further to suggest that deafness and hearing issues should receive long-term attention. According to Stone, the organization wanted hearing health to become a part of the “American mindset” (p. 37). This type of communication about disability issues differs greatly from earlier charity-focused communication which over-emphasized how persons with disabilities are in need of help. A significant element of successful persuasion is how messages are framed. The next section discusses the concept of framing and how it may influence the creation and dissemination of disability-related messages.

**Framing the Disability Message**

The premise of framing was defined by Ervin Goffman (1974a) to explain how individuals make sense of their social world. Media scholar James W. Tankard Jr. (2001) described framing as a “sophisticated concept” in which media presentations can be used “to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate” (p. 96).

The media framing process has been explained in a variety of ways, and often includes how media use images and symbols, spokespersons, and language to communicate important societal messages (Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, & Themba, 1993). Paul Messaris and Linus Abraham (2001) agreed that framing occurs through the presentation of text and images, and acknowledged that selection by the communicator and salience by the receiver are essential elements of media frames. Framing pioneer Robert M. Entman (1993) stated, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p.52). Therefore, media may serve to “reinforce and challenge” individual-level understanding of issues (Sotirovic, 2000, p. 290).
According to communication scholars Kevin M. Carragee and Wim Roefs (2004), a drawback of framing may be that the concept is limited in scope because it refers to story topics or attributes; the role of media frames is not examined in a greater context, which neglects how the agenda is built – or shaped – by societal influences or those in power. Nonetheless, current literature places importance on the concept of framing by relating it to media effects. Dietram A. Scheufele (1999) argued that in the realm of political communication, it is possible to link media frames to media effects by examining framing as a “process model” (p. 103); the separate concepts of frame building, frame setting, individual-level processes of framing, and a feedback loop from audiences to journalists – or those framing the message – are all important pieces of the process. In other words, framing may occur on multiple levels in the communication process. According to Entman (1993), frames may be created and perpetuated by the communicator, the receiver, the text, or the cultural framework in which messages are presented.

Although framing is often explained from a media perspective, other research indicates its applicability to a variety of disciplines. How framing is conceptualized in health communication, psychology, and public relations scholarship is important to the process of disability communication. In health communication, frames may not be limited to broad social interpretations; rather, frames may influence publics on an individual level (Signorielli, 1993; Wallack et al., 2003). Psychology researchers Alexander J. Rothman and Peter Salovey (1997) suggested that framing in health communication not only served to present material in a particular way, but further interacted with social cognitive processes in order to shape personal and group opinions, attitudes, and behavior changes. In fact, David R. Holtgrave, Barbara J. Tinsley, and Linda S. Kay (1995) argued that what may come across as “arbitrary choices of wording – even alternative wording with the same underlying meaning – can have profound impact in terms of the decisions and behaviors they elicit from the target audience” (p. 32).
Public relations scholar Kirk Hallahan (1999) described framing as a necessity for effective public communication. Organizations may contextualize situations for publics, giving them a frame of reference for choices, actions, issues, and responsibilities on the part of organizations and their publics. Public relations scholars Lynn M. Zoch and Juan-Carlos Molleda (2006) described the roles of organizations in further detail. Organizations must understand initially how actions and events may affect their publics and then gather information – both internally and externally – to determine how that information should be presented so that it is mutually beneficial to organizational objectives and public needs. Bryan H. Reber and Bruce K. Berger’s (2005) case study research of the Sierra Club presented framing as a strategic process that can positively assist activist organizations. Their analysis of frames and subframes in communication messages used on the Internet, in Sierra Club newsletters, and regional and national news media indicated that the Sierra Club used issue-based frames such as “drilling threatens one of America’s greatest natural wilderness treasures” and “sprawl threatens our environment, health and quality of life” (p. 188). These frames were used to influence public opinion, perception, attitude, and behavior. Hence, framing may be used strategically by public relations practitioners in other issue-focused organizations, such as disability-related organizations.

Organizations that communicate about disability issues are challenged to construct properly framed messages and tap into social values. Erving Goffman’s book (1974b), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, described the role of framing in creating identities for marginalized groups. Public communication about persons who fall outside the realm of “normal” perpetuates the concept of a virtual identity, or an identity that is socially constructed based on selected information presented. Goffman argued that “a discrepancy may exist between an individual’s virtual and actual identity. This discrepancy…has the effect of cutting
him off from society and from himself so that he stands a discredited person facing an unaccepting world” (p. 19). Goffman used several examples of persons with disabilities who agreed that disability is a social problem of public perception. An example that supported this statement is Caroline C. Wang’s (1998) research on public health communication campaigns. She reviewed a series of images used in popular injury prevention campaigns and concluded that the campaigns, designed to be helpful to the general public, may have negative, stigmatizing effects on persons with disabilities. Themes of pity, fear, and hopelessness were noted in her review, and overall, disabilities were presented as undesirable injuries that could be avoided. Wang reported the comments of several persons with disabilities who viewed the images as damaging to the public conception of disability, and stated, “for people with disabilities, a culture’s response to their disability…may ironically guarantee that people with disabilities are less well off” (p. 154).

It is evident from the literature that when an organization can stimulate public debate or contribute to the news agenda, it may create more visibility and generate ongoing support. Framing is an essential theoretical foundation for public communication about disability because messages disseminated from organizations may be a primary way that publics get information about disability. Although news coverage may promote open discussion about disability as a social issue, organization-driven campaign efforts may further push for reform in public perception and understanding. Disability organizations, however, face the challenges of: 1) trying to communicate accurately and consistently about disability issues; 2) often tackling multiple issues related to their causes; 3) furthering the disability movement rather than hindering it; and 4) keeping publics motivated to react to messages. Therefore, it is imperative that these organizations effectively manage the issues affecting both their organizations and their publics in a sometimes turbulent and always information-saturated environment.
Although public relations commentator Ronald N. Levy (2001) acknowledged that successful public relations practice may have a great influence on how disability is presented in media, little research to date focuses on how organizations shape and frame disability issues for the American public. This research is an initial step toward understanding how organizations communicate their own values in disability messages. Strategic long-term communication about disability may be the key to shaping the societal perception of disability. Therefore, the following section proposes a conceptual framework for disability issues management, closing with the importance of organizational identity to this specific group of organizations.

**A Conceptual Framework for Disability Issues Management**

This dissertation builds on previous work (Lellis, 2006a) that proposed how disability-related organizations in particular may benefit from the conceptual framework of issues management. Organizations that exist to address disability issues have a variety of goals for communication—to influence public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior; to change policy; to draw economic commitments to the issues; to shift stereotypical viewpoints; and to acknowledge societal risks and overarching problems. Reaching these goals may be difficult because disability issues are both complex and fragile. The issues are complex because there is inherent controversy surrounding the topic of disability. For example, viewpoints regarding disability issues as they relate to the healthcare system and civil rights vary dramatically. In addition, the issues considered pertinent by disability populations may not be apparent to others. For example, it is evident that the ADA was not adequately explained to the public. Less-visible debates about civil rights and public policy that do not affect the lives of the general public may make it difficult for some to relate to disability issues. Disability issues are fragile because advocacy groups rely primarily on public support for sustainability. Organizations will benefit
only if publics can relate significantly to the messages communicated, believe them, and act on them.

The framework presented here stipulates that nonprofit organizations that serve the disability community need to structure their communication for long-term impact. A review of the issues management literature informs the conceptual framework that can be applied to disability issues management, and should prompt further scholarship in this area. The following section revisits the six fundamental concepts of issues management that were defined in the literature review, and explains how each might be pertinent to nonprofit communication about disability issues. The argument for starting this line of research by exploring the sixth concept – organizational identity – is also presented.

**Concept #1: The Issues Life Cycle**

The issues life cycle is extremely relevant to long-term perpetuation of disability issues on the public agenda. The key to gaining momentum for a disability issue is getting it recognized externally, then managing the issue to help avoid it from lingering in the critical or dormant stages of the life cycle. If the issue becomes dormant, the focus may be on decreasing the time between dormancy and the next pre-issue stage, thereby keeping the cyclical nature of the disability issue in constant motion. In addition, as Hallahan (2001) noted in his work on an issues process model, publics should be motivated to be active, aroused, or aware of what is happening in American society that makes the cause an important issue. Organizations are charged with the task of motivating publics so they will not be inactive or completely removed from issues. For example, in an article in the trade publication *PRWeek*, Anita Chabria (2005) discussed the case of a nonprofit hospital network that became a leader in long-term reputation management. She attributed the network’s success to the implementation of long-term strategic efforts that recognized the impact of the changing nature of issues and publics.
**Concept #2: Environmental Scanning**

Environmental scanning may also benefit organizations that communicate about disability issues. Disability issues are complex in nature, and environmental scanning requires that organizations audit or track issues within the context of current debate, policy, and news. This activity affords organizations the opportunity to continuously react to ongoing public dialogue, thereby keeping disability issues in the forefront of public debate. Although this process requires an investment of resources, environmental scanning efforts will ensure that multiple people or groups within organizations can position disability issues appropriately as the issues evolve. For example, the American Lung Association (ALA) used media attention surrounding the shortage of flu vaccines to its advantage. By recognizing the importance of the issue to publics and positioning itself as the expert on the shortage crisis, ALA used the situation to disseminate its own messages about lung health. This campaign helped build ongoing relationships with aware and active publics who were concerned about getting the flu (McGuire, 2005).

**Concept #3: Legitimacy**

If organizations can legitimize a disability issue, they may elevate the issue in the minds of publics, maintain attention that will benefit the organization, and promote changes in policy or research agendas that will benefit members of the disability community. Organizational legitimacy may create challenges, however, for some nonprofit organizations. Not only must the organization create legitimacy for its disability issue, but must also ensure that the organization and those who promote it or represent it are accepted by the organization’s publics. Legitimization often requires a shift in thinking or significant change in attitude or behavior on the part of publics. For example, Marion Nestle and Michael F. Jacobson (2000) discussed the difficulty in publicly addressing the topic of obesity. Although the medical community
recognizes obesity as a significant public health crisis and an important disability-related issue, a large sector of the population has not. The challenge of reaching publics may be attributed to the “unintended consequences of our post-industrial society [which] are deeply rooted cultural, societal, and economic factors that actively encourage overeating and sedentary behavior and discourage alterations in these patterns” (p. 18). This situation, according to Nestle and Jacobson, “calls for more active and comprehensive intervention strategies” (p. 18). In other words, the concern for obesity as a long-term disabling condition has not yet been legitimized for publics, and organizations that aim to do so face a certain amount of resistance.

**Concept #4: Advocacy and Persuasion**

With constant competition for funding and recognition in the nonprofit arena, organizations need to communicate in ways that will influence not only the media’s and the public’s agendas, but policy formation as well. Knowing that the popularity of disability issues may wax and wane, nonprofit organizations are challenged to keep disability issues front and center. Whether the message is to donate a small amount of money to the cause or to make significant behavioral changes, nonprofit organizations benefit if communication is persuasive in nature.

Advocacy is crucial to the disability message (Johnstone, 2001). Celebrities are often asked, for example, to advocate for health and disability issues because they attract media attention and have the ability to elevate issues in the minds of publics (Lellis, 2005; Wallack, et al., 1993). For example, a study of the effects of a week-long cancer awareness campaign and Katie Couric’s live colonoscopy on the *Today Show* in March 2000 revealed a significant, temporary increase in colonoscopies following the campaign (Cram et al., 2003). Attention to disability issues may be inadvertently generated when publics make their own decisions to invest interest. In addition, news coverage of Elizabeth Edwards’ cancer recurrence is cited as
important to cancer awareness because it reinvigorated publics and raised the status of cancer as an important social issue (Charlamb, 2007; “Edwards’ next,” 2007).

Concept #5: Relationship Management

The practice of relationship management emphasizes an organization’s commitment to addressing pertinent disability issues with invested publics; nonprofit organizations become a reliable source of information. Additionally, meaningful dialogue may translate into the long-term sustainability of the disability agenda and may give more legitimacy to the cause. The ability to build and maintain a successful organization-public relationship is vital to disability-related nonprofit success. Engaging the community, for example, is cited as a must for successful public health communication campaigns (Guttman, 2000). In the 1990s, pharmaceutical company Merck maintained a viable and positive image by initiating an ongoing dialogue and close relationship with the AIDS community. The AIDS community recognized the critical role that pharmaceutical companies would play in the battle against AIDS, and Merck worked to ensure that AIDS activists would trust the company by sharing information and encouraging feedback (Taylor, Vasquez, & Doorley, 2003).

Concept #6: Organizational Identity

The concept of organizational identity is of particular interest because of its central role in long-term organizational stability. Organizational identity serves not only to brand the nonprofit organization, but also to brand the disability issue. Presenting a consistent message and maintaining a distinct identity may assist disability-related nonprofit organizations in communicating effectively about long-term issues. Many publics, especially those who live with disabilities, may appreciate consistency from organizations with recognizable identities. Consistency is also a key to establishing trust in an organization-public relationship (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Consider the nonprofit wristband craze, which allowed some organizations
the opportunity to brand their health issues and make their identities prominent within mainstream society (Lorek, 2005).

Disability-related organizations likely possess identifying characteristics of collective importance, which provide foundations for the development of their organizational identities. Successful communication of organizational identity may not only help shape the disability community, but may also influence public perception and understanding of disability issues. Elizabeth Depoy and Stephen French Gilson (2004) purported that the cultural identity of disability is often rooted in oppression and discrimination. Organizations, however, may wish to construct comprehensive identities that more accurately represent their individual causes. This dissertation is designed to look at how the underlying values central to disability-related groups dictate organizational identities that may resonate with publics. These identities guide organization communication efforts, thereby shaping how disability is viewed for years to come. This research is an important contribution in the study of long-term issues management for specific disability-related organizations, as previous direct work with local organizational representatives indicated the presence of a true struggle to successfully create identities for disability-related causes (Lellis, 2006b).

Summary

Communication creates a forum for persons with disabilities and their advocates to increase awareness of disability as a social issue. News coverage, advertising, and public communication are all ways in which publics are connected to disability issues. Organizations that serve persons with disabilities have a crucial role in the communications process and the ongoing disability movement. This research examines the concept of organizational identity for local disability-related nonprofit organizations. The next chapter relays the research questions and methods used in this dissertation.
Chapter 4: Research Questions and Methods

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore, as key components to issues management, the identities of organizations that have a common purpose. Organizational identity can be measured by communicated values; as noted in the literature review, case study approaches have been used to look at the identities of individual organizations. This dissertation builds on Aust’s (2000, 2004) organizational values research by examining the identities of a group of organizations rather than just one organization. It pushes the current line of values research by looking at a group of disability organizations and uncovering similarities in the underlying values of those organizations. This chapter presents three research questions and describes the two methodological approaches that were used to examine the concept of organizational identity for local nonprofit organizations that communicate about disability issues. The following questions support the contentions that organizational communication efforts could better shape how disability issues are perceived, that a strong organizational identity is important to long-term communication efforts about disability issues, and that values serve as a way of measuring organizational identity.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the communicated values of nonprofit organizations that serve persons with disabilities?

To answer this question, this study applied an augmented version of Aust’s (2000, 2004) values instrument to communication tools provided by a variety of disability-related nonprofit organizations. Values have been described as the building blocks of an organization’s identity; therefore, this question is fundamental to this dissertation.
RQ2: *What are the communicated values, if any, that this group of organizations share?*

This question expands Aust’s (2000, 2004) work from one organization to a group of organizations. This question is important because the results identify conclusions about collective identities of organizations that exist to serve common purposes.

RQ3: *What is the relationship between perceived and projected organizational identities among these organizations?*

This question builds on the assessment of values as organizational identity by looking at more-specific nuances. Research indicates that identity is multifaceted, and there may be incongruence in what an organization wishes to communicate (its perceived identity) and what the organization actually communicates (its projected identity). Answering this question may help professionals understand why it is difficult to not only understand one’s own organizational identity, but also to communicate it effectively to others.

**A Mixed-Methods Approach**

Two methods were used to address the research questions: 1) a quantitative content analysis; and 2) qualitative in-depth interviews. A mixed-method approach is beneficial to mass communication research for several reasons. First, it allows for triangulation, which involves the use of multiple perspectives in examining a phenomenon. Triangulation benefits research because it creates more confidence in the findings (Denzin, 1978a; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998).

Second, the use of multiple methods may “provide the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 15). Steven C. Currall and Annette J. Towler (2003) reviewed current trends in management and organizational research and argued that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods may provide greater depth when exploring organizational phenomena. Use of multiple methods has proved to yield
“greater information” than using one method alone (p. 520), particularly when a variety of questions are posed, a plethora of theoretical approaches are adopted from other disciplines such as psychology and sociology, and multiple levels of analysis are used. For example, in this study, organizational identity may reflect a combination of both individual and collective values, which calls for multiple modes of examination to arrive at a more-comprehensive understanding of the concept.

Third, a mixed-methods approach is useful when research explores new areas. A mixed-methods approach was particularly important to this study because it allowed for the exploration of both an organization’s projected and perceived identity, which Illia, et al. (2004) asserted are crucial to understanding the overall conceptualization of organizational identity. The quantitative portion of this research answered RQ1 and RQ2, and supported the portion of RQ3 that addresses the disability organizations’ projected identities, or the identities that are portrayed through communicated values in public relations materials. The qualitative portion addresses the second portion of RQ3, which requires the examination of the perceived identities of disability organizations, or the identities organizational leaders wish to project to others.

Fourth, organizational communication scholar Daisy Lemus (2005) asserted that a mixed-method approach benefits research “in which the phenomena of inquiry is complex and accounts for individuals as well as patterns, for social construction of reality as compared to organizational reality, and so on” (p. 18-19). As demonstrated in the literature review, organizational identity and values meet these standards. The quantitative content analysis provides a look into the reality of an organization’s efforts, and the qualitative interviews provide an insight into how organizational identity may be socially constructed. This chapter explains how organizations were recruited for this research and the organizational sample used. It also
describes the two methodological approaches used, beginning with the quantitative portion of this research.

**Organizational Recruitment**

A convenience sample of organizations was used to examine the research questions. This type of sample is justified because the topic is under-researched. Convenience samples are also often used because 1) a certain population or a set of media content is readily available, and/or 2) specific money and/or time constraints influence how a sample can be selected (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). For this dissertation, it was most convenient to sample from local organizations that met the inclusion criteria and could be easily accessed. To qualify for this study, organizations needed to have 501(c)3 (nonprofit) status and directly serve a local disability population or advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. As identified in the previous chapter, disability is defined as an impairment that is chronic rather than acute, and implies some type of societal barrier. Nonprofit organizations are often created to address societal barriers for persons with disabilities, whether these are equal opportunity barriers, physical access issues, personal adjustment issues, or deficits in public education or research funding that would shed better light on the complexities of a disease.

Organizations that either previously participated in similar research projects or were identified through networking contacts were asked to participate. Organizations were recruited by telephone or e-mail contact and asked to participate in the project (See Appendix A for recruitment scripts). Participation required that the organization provide 1) access to public relations materials used in the last year, and 2) access to leaders of the organizations for in-depth interviews. Organizational contacts were informed during the recruitment process that they would be provided with an individualized report of the results at the end of the study. This
The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before organizational contact was initiated (Appendix B).

**Organizational Sample**

Contact was initiated with 27 local organizations within a 50-mile radius during March and April, 2007. Of the organizations contacted, four were excluded because organizational representatives identified the organizations as government organizations, which do not have 501(c)3 status. Meetings were conducted with representatives from 13 organizations. Three of these organizations were excluded based on the fact that their primary missions did not meet inclusion criteria. After a review of the documents, or sampling units, collected for the quantitative portion, it was determined that the 10 remaining organizations provided a sample sufficient to answer the research questions posed.

Ten organizations were used in this study. Organizations were assigned random letter labels (A-J) and are referred to by these labels throughout the results and discussion sections. During the recruitment and interview process, some demographic information was noted for each organization including the annual budget size, whether or not the organization had an affiliation with a larger national or state organization, and the primary disability population served.

**Method #1: Quantitative Assessment of Communicated Values**

A quantitative, computer-assisted content analysis of public relations materials was designed to: 1) describe the values central to the disability organizations (RQ1); 2) describe how these values relate collectively (RQ2); and 3) identify the projected identity of the organizations (RQ3). This section explains how content analysis is a viable method for answering the research questions, describes Aust’s (2000, 2004) procedure for developing a values instrument and
analyzing organizational documents, and outlines the process used for the content analysis produced for this dissertation.

**Why Content Analysis?**

The goal of content analysis is to uncover the characteristics inherent in the content observed and identify relationships among these characteristics (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). It is also a viable method for values research; several studies have used organizational documents to analyze underlying values structures (see Aust, 2000, 2004; Buenger, Daft, Conlon, & Austin, 1996; Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995; McDonald & Gandz, 1992; Morely & Shockley-Zalaback, 1991). Kabanoff, Waldersee, and Cohen (1995) described organizational documents as containing both “image and substance” (p. 1099). In other words, although organizational documents represent the image of an organization, they also serve to communicate important organizational objectives. Currall and Towler (2003) also described the strength of document analysis in organizational research because documents reflect organizational qualities. According to Anders Hansen, Simon Cottle, Ralph Negrine, and Chris Newbold (1998), content analysis is well suited for studies that examine how communicated “output reflect[s] social and cultural issues, values, and phenomena” (p. 123).

Content analysis is a useful method for several reasons. First, it is systematic, meaning it is based on a particular set of procedures. Second, content analysis is objective, meaning it restricts interpretation of the research so the researcher may describe what is manifested in the content. Third, it is replicable, which serves future research studies. Fourth, content analysis is unobtrusive because it allows the researcher to gather information without relying on significant interpersonal interaction. Fifth, it permits the study of large amounts of data, such as the variety of materials sought for this study (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005; Wimmer
Content analysis has limitations because it focuses on manifest content including the frequency of symbols represented in communication content, rather than the latent, or inferred, meaning. Hence, researchers cannot interpret what the absence of certain content characteristics may mean (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). In addition, researchers cannot infer the effects of content on particular audiences; it can only serve as a descriptive measure of the qualities in the content. Computer-assisted content analysis, although valuable for its ability to assess large quantities of information, can only measure the presence of words or phrases; it does not account for the intensity of the messages or the context in which the content is situated (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

**Content Analysis Instrument**

This research builds on Aust’s (2000, 2004) dissertation in which the organizational identity of the United Church of God was described by measuring communicated values with 248 organizational documents. The first step in developing an instrument for this research was to examine the values instrument he created. First, he used Rokeach’s (1968, 1973) list of 18 instrumental, or day-to-day values, and 18 terminal, or end-state, values (Appendix C) and, with the assistance of a variety of dictionaries, thesauruses, and Roderick P. Hart’s (2000) value dictionaries, created a values instrument that assigned several terms to each of the 36 values defined by Rokeach. Aust then drew a random sample of data (5%) from the 248 documents he collected and identified additional organization-specific values terms and added them to his instrument. Each term was expanded to include all its tenses. Independent reviewers ensured that values terms were distinct to each value and made recommendations for additional terms. The resulting values index was an instrument of 1,039 terms representing Rokeach’s 36 value categories. For example, the value “courageous” is defined by terms such as “bold, “brave,”
“bravery,” and “brazen.”

After using human coders to code 5% of his data by hand, Aust (2000, 2004) decided to use computer-assisted content analysis because of the low intercoder reliability associated with the human-coding process, the complexity of the project itself, and advantages of using computerized coding for organizational values research (Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995). Computer-assisted content analysis is useful because it provides a quick overview of the qualities inherent in the content. It is standardized and not subject to human error or interpretation (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005), often making it more accurate than human coding (Rosenberg, Schnurr, & Oxman, 1990).

Aust (2000, 2004) chose the DICTION software for analysis. According to the program’s creator, Roderick P. Hart (1984), DICTION is particularly useful in systematically and accurately examining communication messages. Hart (1984) developed DICTION originally to be used in political communication research. He recognized that his research focused on the properties of communicated messages. DICTION would serve as a way to systematically and reliably measure these properties. Hart (1984) also wanted a way to closely examine the language used by organizations, which would allow manifest properties of messages to emerge from analysis. Although this dissertation is based on Aust’s method, specific procedures were developed to select and prepare the content for analysis, augment Aust’s values instrument, and analyze the data. These procedures are described below.

**Content Selection and Sample**

This content analysis was designed to assess external organizational communication tools. A document checklist helped organizational representatives identify the communication materials – such as brochures, Web copy, and organizational newsletters or magazines – used in the last year (Appendix D). This checklist was derived in part by a review of Barbara Diggs-
Brown’s (2007) text, *The PR Styleguide: Formats for Public Relations Practice*, which provides a comprehensive overview of communication tools typically employed by professionals in the field. This document checklist was reviewed in person with each organizational leader. All questions regarding whether certain documents should be submitted were answered by the researcher. Organizational leaders were also encouraged to submit documents that could not easily be placed into a category on the checklist but were part of current communications campaigns.

Once all documents were collected, each document was reviewed by the researcher to ensure that it met criteria to be included as a sampling unit. First, materials had to be used for external communication purposes. Therefore, internal communication documents (e.g., memos, employee e-mails, etc.) were not included because this analysis was designed to examine projected values only. Second, to get an idea of the values currently communicated, only documents produced in the last year were included. If an organization, however, submitted documents that were produced more than a year ago but were still currently in use, these documents were included. Third, documents had to provide full text to be included. For example, PowerPoint presentations or speech notes – but without paragraphed scripts – were excluded. Finally, for organizations affiliated or supported by a larger organization, only documents produced by the local organization or branded with the local organization’s name were included.

A total of 452 documents were used as sampling units. Belief or mission statements (a category used on the checklist) were not included as separate sampling units because – for each organization – these statements appeared within the documents collected. An “other” category was created for documents that did not fall into one of the specified categories; these documents were fliers, posters, and handouts.
All sampling units were scanned individually to determine the recording units that would be used for analysis. Aust (2000, 2004) used entire documents, ranging in length from one to more than 10 pages, as the recording units. Entire documents were not used as recording units for this study because of the great variance in length and document type. Instead, individual paragraphs of content were selected as the recording units. Paragraphs selected as a recording units had to meet at least one of the following criteria: 1) refer to the organization by name; 2) indicate organizational principles or purpose; 3) identify the disabilities or disability issues of concern to the organization; or 4) specify the services or programs provided to constituents of the organization. If a bulleted list met inclusion criteria, it was counted as one paragraph of content. Picture captions and calendar listings (common in newsletters) were not included. If events were described, however, and met one of the criteria for inclusion, these paragraphs were included as recording units.

A total of 5,332 recording units were identified for analysis. All recording units were converted to text (.txt) files to be loaded into the DICTION program. Paragraphs from documents not submitted in electronic format had to be scanned and converted or retyped. Four independent research assistants helped create text files.

**Final Values Instrument**

A pilot procedure based on Aust’s (2000, 2004) process was employed to augment his original 1,039-term values instrument. This process ensured a valid instrument was used and that values language commonly used by disability-related organizations was included in final values instrument. First, a random sample of the recording units was selected to search for additional values terms. Because the number of recording units per organization varied tremendously (from 174 to 1,464 units per organization with a standard deviation of 417 from the mean), a cluster sample was used in order to accurately capture the different language used by all 10
organizations. Therefore, an equal number of recording units from each organization was randomly selected. A total of 270 recording units were pulled for the pilot procedure (27 units from each of the 10 organizations), which was equal to approximately 5% of the total recording units.

The 270-unit sample was scanned by the researcher, and all terms that appeared to be values-related were identified (n=691). Terms not already listed in Aust’s (2000, 2004) values instrument were identified as a possible fit for a specific values category. In several cases, it was difficult to tentatively place terms that either had multiple meanings or did not stand alone as values-related terms (e.g., “adopt,” “detailed,” “feeling,” “necessary,” “receive,” “tailored,” “transition”). Therefore, two independent reviewers assisted in decisions regarding the final placement or exclusion of each term. The reviewers were familiarized with Rokeach’s (1973) 36 values categories and Aust’s existing values instrument. Each term was placed or excluded by consensus with the researcher and the two independent reviewers.

A total of 361 new terms were added to the values instrument. One of the primary goals in the placement of the terms was to ensure the 36 value categories were mutually exclusive. During the review process, the team noted a few terms – “protected,” “protection,” and “loving” – that Aust had placed into two values categories. In these cases, the best placement for the terms was determined by consensus. A few duplicate terms that appeared twice in the same category were also removed.

Next, the customized values instrument was reviewed and a total of 152 tense variations for the new terms were added. For example, the consensus process determined that the term “rewarding” should be added to the instrument, and therefore this terms was expanded to include “reward,” “rewards,” and “rewarded.” Tense variations were not added in cases in which tense changed the meaning of the term or created multiple meanings. For example, the term
“driven” was placed by the team into the instrumental value category “ambitious,” but the tense variation “drive” was not added. The final values instrument retained the original 36 values as defined by Rokeach (1968, 1973), all of the specific terms identified by Aust (2000, 2004), and the new terms identified through the pilot procedure. The final instrument consisted of 1,548 terms (Appendix E).

**Data Analysis**

The customized values instrument was loaded into the DICTION 5.0 software program, which included 36 separate dictionaries, or one dictionary per value. All recording units for each organization were loaded into DICTION 5.0. The DICTION software identified the value-related terms in each recording unit and provided frequencies for each value category. Data were transferred into Excel and relative frequencies were calculated so that values categories could be compared to one another. Descriptive statistics were used to report the values central to each individual organization and the collective group of organizations, thereby providing a way to describe individual and collective organizational identities.

**Limitations**

This portion of the research has limitations inherent in the methodological design of content analysis and the procedures used. First, regardless of efforts to create a comprehensive values instrument, it is possible that some valid terms may not have been categorized, and were therefore not part of the values instrument. Issues of validity often arise with content analysis (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). Although Aust’s (2000, 2004) values instrument was reexamined and augmented for disability-related organizations, values categories were not empirically tested. Although the values categories were visually inspected, it would take much replication over time to systematically create comprehensive
exclusive and exhaustive dictionaries of values terms. This research is a small step toward this goal.

Second, document collection was challenging because the majority of organizations did not systematically retain or track communications efforts, and it was evident that fewer documents were available than were actually used during the year. Some organizations kept better records, but either did not have the time or resources to pull all documents that met inclusion criteria by deadline, or misunderstood the research and only submitted a few examples of the documents requested. In these cases the purpose of the research was restated and the document checklist was reviewed for a second time with the organizational leader responsible for submitting the materials. Organizational leaders were sometimes asked to e-mail or mail additional documents that would ensure a more-comprehensive sample. In some instances, the researcher personally assisted the organizational leader in collecting materials from computer file folders or supply rooms on-site.

Additionally, the content analysis examined the text of documents only, utilizing the definition of organizational identity as the values an organization communicates to its publics through language. Future research may include analysis of the visual symbols used in communication practices, such as logos or photography/illustrations, for additional exploration into organizational identity.

The following section reviews the second qualitative method used to address the research questions posed by this dissertation. In-depth interviews were conducted with organizational leaders to ascertain the perceived organizational identities of local disability-related organizations.
Method #2: Interpretive Assessment of Perceived Values

Qualitative interviews were conducted with organizational leaders – interviewed between April and May, 2007 – in order to understand what these members see as key values to their organizations and how they socially construct perceived organizational identity. The qualitative aspect addressed the portion of RQ3 about perceived organizational identity. An interview method ensured the voices of participants revealed the construction of a values-based culture (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The follow section explains why qualitative interviewing was useful for this dissertation and describes the data collection and analysis procedures.

According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2000), the culture within an organization dictates the values it wishes to communicate to others. Culture can be described as the way of life for an organization or group. It is a socially constructed phenomenon often controlled by an organization’s power structure. John Frow and Meaghan Morris (2000) indicated that culture is “imagined as a plastic medium that politically powerful social elites may rework and remold at will” (p. 316). Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba (2000) described culture as being rooted in the dialogue, interactions, viewpoints, and experiences of individuals, which can be best examined through qualitative research.

Qualitative research adds a thick layer of description and detail to the phenomenon of study—one way to explore a phenomenon is through interpretive study. Interpretivists believe that is possible to expose the beliefs and desires of individuals (Denzin, 2001; Schwandt, 2000). Interpretivism is not about prediction; researchers go in with openness to gain information, generate insight, and examine socially constructed meaning rather than test a predictable hypothesis (Denzin, 2001; Putnam, 1983). That is, the researcher seeks to identify the perceptions held by study participants. Illia et al. (2004) discussed the importance of considering
the perceived identity of an organization, or the way in which members of the organization perceive the organization to be. Additional information regarding the internal perceptions of organizational values supplemented the manifest, or projected, content examined in the quantitative analysis. Therefore, an interpretive approach was particularly important to address RQ3.

Interpretive research involves a partnership among the participants and the researchers (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). As with all research methods, interpretive research and analysis has its limitations. First, researchers must utilize their authority responsibly in guiding the content of discussions and accurately representing the voices of the research participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Second, researchers must address reflexivity, which is the process of “reflecting critically on the self as the researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). Personal biases may enter into qualitative analysis, and ethical standards should be maintained to the best of researchers’ abilities (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000). Third, researchers must acknowledge the potential for reactivity, which is how researchers or participants can influence data collection and analysis (Schwandt, 2001). Procedures were in place to minimize potential participant bias – when the participant responds to inquiry with what he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear – as well as potential researcher influence on data collection and analysis, and are discussed in the following segment. The next sections explain how interview participants were identified and selected, the steps taken to conduct the interviews and the sample used, and the method of data analysis.

**Interview Procedure and Sample**

The interview guide was constructed to elicit the values central to the individual, the organization, and the organization’s communication efforts. Open-ended, or descriptive, questions benefit the interview process because they are structured to understand the individual
James P. Spradley (1979) compared the use of descriptive questions to giving participants a “frame and canvas and asking them to paint a word-picture of their experience” (p. 85). The guide for this research was constructed to first establish rapport with the participant and then delve into the specific concepts important to analysis—values and organizational identity. Two individuals who work for nonprofit organizations were asked to participate in a pilot study to test the interview questions to ensure they were easy to understand and answerable. Revisions to the interview guide were implemented before the interview process with research participants began. The final interview guide included nine questions with a variety of prompts to probe for additional detail and meaning (Appendix F).

Participants in any qualitative study must be chosen carefully to include only those individuals who experience the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 1998). A snowball sampling technique was employed to gather the convenience sample of participants. Organizational leaders who served as the point of contact were asked to recommend participants (themselves and/or other organizational representatives) in leadership positions who most influence the communication efforts of the organization. Interview participants were expected to understand the communications structure of the organization and be able to discuss the topic of values. In some cases, persons in the top position at the organization were not accessible and those in middle management were recommended by their leaders to participate.

No set number of interviews is required in qualitative research. Rather, researchers seek participants until enough data are collected to reach data saturation (Patton, 1980). Interviews were sought until enough data were provided so the values that participants believe their organizations uphold and how individuals experience these value structures could be clearly described. Participants were asked to relay their personal views; hence, other individuals may
have provided different viewpoints. With the participant criteria, however, knowledgeable viewpoints resulted, and further research could explore other voices important to organizational identity.

Before the interviews began, participants were given an overview of the study objectives and were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix G), required by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Institutional Review Board. In-depth interviews were conducted at the participants’ offices or at locations convenient to the participants in order to make the interviewing process comfortable. Michael Quinn Patton (1980), a scholar in qualitative methodology, advised in his work that the researcher maintain “maximum flexibility to be able to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate” (p. 199). Therefore, the question order varied based on participant responses, and some interviews covered areas not originally proposed in the interview guide (Denzin, 1978b; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1980). As a result, participants served as co-guides in the interview process. Participants were encouraged to use their own conceptualizations of terms such as values, image, and identity; probes were used to clarify the participants’ constructed perspectives. Participants were asked to clarify the use of any jargon and notes of observations were recorded during the interview process. This information was documented in analytic memos to aid in analysis (Spradley, 1979). See Appendix H for a sample analytic memo.

Ten interview sessions, or one for each organization, were conducted. Two organizations opted to have more than one organizational leader participate at the same time; therefore 12 organizational leaders participated in 10 interviews. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and are used throughout the results and discussion chapters of this dissertation. Interview time varied based on individual responses and to allow enough time for participants to fully answer the interview questions (Patton, 1980), but was typically around one hour for each
interview. Interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist familiar with confidentiality measures. Verbatim transcription was required for the analysis, as scripts provided a detailed description of the experiences of each participant. Confidentiality of the data was ensured by giving participants the option to speak off the record if they did not wish to be recorded. At the conclusions of the interviews, participants were asked for permission to be contacted should questions arise during transcription or analysis. Digital files were stored on a password-protected computer.

**Data Analysis**

Transcribed interviews were analyzed with a phenomenological approach as described by Clark E. Moustakas (1994). Phenomenological methods are most useful when the researcher is trying to understand the individuals’ experiences; phenomenologists try to find the meaning in personally constructed narratives (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1980). According to qualitative researcher John W. Creswell (1998), a phenomenological study “describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept” (p. 51). The key word here is “describe”—a phenomenological analysis describes a phenomenon rather than explains it. According to Moustakas, “descriptions keep a phenomenon alive, illuminate its presence, accentuate its underlying meanings, enable the phenomenon to linger, retain its spirit, as near to its actual nature as possible” (p. 59). This approach addressed the research goal to paint a vivid picture of how values create foundations for organizational communication efforts, and also to identify what values organizational leaders consider to be important.

Analysis was conducted in several steps – otherwise known as phenomenological reduction – with the final goal of describing a single unit of meaning that is true for all participants (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). First, the focus was to represent the true voices of participants, which Moustakas refers to as the Epoche. In this step, the interviewer brackets
or “set[s] aside…prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). Moustakas and Creswell recommended the researcher write out any preconceptions of the data that could cloud conclusions and refer to these notations throughout the analysis. This process was completed so to allow “preconceptions and prejudices [to] enter consciousness and leave freely” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89) throughout analysis. The Epoche is outlined in the results chapter.

Second, data underwent horizontalization, in which every statement related to the phenomenon of study was identified and assigned equal value (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas described horizontalization as the part of phenomenological reduction in which the “qualities of the experience become the focus” (p. 90), and only what is “texturally meaningful and essential” remains (p. 93). This process generated a list of phrases – or specific meaning units – that related to values. Meaning units were written out and clustered.

In the third step, referred to as variation, clusters of meaning were interpreted from different vantage points (Moustakas, 1994). Results illuminated the “essential structures of a phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98), and showed “how” participants experienced a values structure.

The final step of analysis produced a short description that represents the shared experiences among participants (Moustakas, 1994). The goal was to provide insight into the role of a comprehensive values ideology that served the individual participants and their organizations.

This chapter detailed the procedures used to conduct a content analysis of organizational communication tools and in-depth interviews with knowledgeable leaders of 10 organizations. The following chapter presents the results of this research, beginning with a review of the
organizational sample and providing the results of the quantitative content analysis and qualitative interviews.
Chapter 5: Results

This chapter reports the results of the quantitative content analysis and the qualitative interviewing process. Information obtained through conversations with organizational representatives was used to describe the diversity of the 10 organizations studied in this research without revealing their identities (Table 1).

Three categories were used to report the budget sizes of the organizations. Six organizations have operating annual budgets of more than $1 million. One organization has an annual budget in the $500,000 to $999,999 range, and three organizations have annual budgets of less than $500,000. Half of the organizations reported an affiliation with a larger organization (either a state or national organization), and the other half operate independently, with no affiliations with larger organizations. Of the five independent organizations, two organizations oversee smaller affiliate groups, local chapters, or programming managed in multiple local communities.

Leaders reported that their organizations represent a variety of disability populations—from mental illnesses to developmental disabilities to chronic health conditions such as cancer. The disability labels used by most of the organizations seemed quite encompassing. For example, Laura (Organization A) and George (Organization J) used the term “intellectual disability” to describe persons who traditionally receive a medical diagnosis of mental retardation or persons who may not meet specific mental retardation criteria but have similar support and habilitation needs. Kathryn (Organization D) and Melinda (Organization E) used the term “developmental disability” to describe persons who have disabilities that prevent “normal”
physical or mental development. Two organizations (G and H) serve populations described as being individuals with “special needs.” When asked to elaborate, Madeline, the organizational leader for Organization H, responded, “Children and adults with profound and severe mental disabilities are who we have historically served. [We have] broadened that to include children whose disabilities may not be as profound or severe...who might be more mild on the spectrum.” Organization G serves children only, and Debra described children with special needs as those that have “a diagnosis of needing early prevention services or school services” or “a medical condition.”

Organizations, in general, however, seem relatively open to serving a wide range of people. Although eight of the organizations easily identified one primary disability population with a label other than “special needs,” three of these organizational leaders – Laura, Kathryn, and Melinda – reported or even emphasized that their organizations (A, D, and E respectively) are often open to serving a multitude of individuals, including those with “general” disability issues or disabilities related to developmental disability, intellectual disability and in some cases, mental illness. Laura, from Organization A, stated, “We really don’t exclude any disability group,” and Kathryn, from Organization D, explained, “The mission of the statewide [organization] I work for has changed from the term ‘developmental disabilities’ to just ‘disabilities’ to accommodate [a new program].” Leaders from the two organizations (F and I) that provide mental health support and services also reported working with some consumers who have substance abuse disorders, but did not identify this as their primary population served. The leader from Organization F also reported that consumers occasionally include persons with developmental disabilities. Leaders from all organizations, with the exception of Organization E, reported that they provide direct services or programs specifically for family members of people
in their target populations. The next section describes the results of the quantitative content analysis.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Annual budget</th>
<th>Larger affiliation?</th>
<th>Primary disability population served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>Yes/national</td>
<td>Intellectual disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Autism spectrum disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>&lt; $500,000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Developmental disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Developmental disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; $500,000</td>
<td>Yes/state</td>
<td>Mental health disorders/mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>&lt; $500,000</td>
<td>Yes/state</td>
<td>Special needs (children only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>$500,000-$999,000</td>
<td>Yes/national</td>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>≥ $1 million</td>
<td>Yes/national</td>
<td>Intellectual disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method #1: Quantitative Assessment of Communicated Values

This section details the results of the content analysis conducted with DICTION 5.0. It begins with a description of sampling and recording units used in the analysis and then reports the results of the content analysis for each organization and the group.

Description of Sampling Units

A total of 452 documents from 10 organizations were selected as sampling units in this study. Sampling units varied in length, from as little as one sentence of text to more than 20 pages of text, or in some cases, multiple pages of html coding (i.e., Web sites). The most-popular documents included public service announcements (20% or n=89), other documents (16% or n=71), e-mail alerts (12% or n=54), newsletters or magazines (11% or n=49), and news releases
(10% or n=44). The least-used documents included media kits (less than 1% or n=1), opinion editorials (1% or n=3), annual reports (1% or n=5), and speeches (1% or n=6) (Table 2). As mentioned in the methods chapter, the “other” category was created to represent fliers, posters, and handouts that did not fit into any of the categories used in the document checklist.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of document</th>
<th>Sampling units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual report</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>8 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>6 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail alert</td>
<td>12 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheet</td>
<td>8 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media advisory</td>
<td>6 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media kit</td>
<td>&lt; 1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters/magazine</td>
<td>11 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News release</td>
<td>10 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion editorial</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>20 (89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>2 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102 (452)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percents do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Each organization is represented by a unique set of sampling units. For each organization, the number of sampling units ranged from 14 (Organizations D and F) to 122 documents (Organization J), with a mean of 45 units (SD=40). The types of sampling units
varied greatly from organization to organization. For example, although PSAs were the most-
popular documents, representing 20% of the collective sample, these sampling units came from
only four of 10 organizations. Fact sheets, newsletters or magazines, and Web sites are the only
sampling units that are represented by all organizations. Most organizations, with the exception
of one or two, are also represented by brochures, news releases, and other documents (Table 3).
Data did not appear to be driven by demographic variables. The number or type of sampling
unit was not predictable based on budget size, organizational affiliation, or primary disability
population served.
Table 3  
Types of Sampling Units by Organization (n=452)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of document</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>Total by organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual report</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>3 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>97 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
<td>5 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>14 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>29 (4)</td>
<td>17 (3)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>29 (9)</td>
<td>7 (9)</td>
<td>102 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (3)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>10 (3)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>101 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail alert</td>
<td>39 (16)</td>
<td>51 (32)</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>101 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheet</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>21 (3)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>6 (1)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>29 (9)</td>
<td>10 (12)</td>
<td>101 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media advisory</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>22 (27)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media kit</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters/magazine</td>
<td>24 (10)</td>
<td>14 (9)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>14 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>21 (3)</td>
<td>33 (6)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>19 (6)</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>101 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News release</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>9 (10)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>6 (2)</td>
<td>19 (23)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion editorial</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
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<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>40 (44)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>34 (41)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>6 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>3 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>101 (18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>16 (10)</td>
<td>32 (35)</td>
<td>21 (3)</td>
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<td>29 (4)</td>
<td>28 (5)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>99 (31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percents may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
**Description of Recording Units**

A total of 5,334 paragraphs of content from the 452 sampling units were selected as recording units (Table 4). The number of recording units per organization ranged from 174 (Organization D) to 1,466 (Organization B), with a mean of 533 (SD=417) recording units for each organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Recording units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15 (810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>27 (1,466)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10 (545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3 (174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 (194)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4 (209)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>4 (205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>5 (279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>12 (617)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>16 (835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (5,334)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the number of recording units was generally in proportion to the number of sampling units, this finding was not always the case. For example, the organization with the most sampling units (n=122 from Organization J) resulted in the second-largest number of recording
units (n=835). The organization with the second-largest number of sampling units (n=109 from Organization C) represented only 10% of the final sample of recording units (Table 5).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Sampling units</th>
<th>Recording units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>15 (810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14 (63)</td>
<td>27 (1,466)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>24 (109)</td>
<td>10 (545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3 (14)</td>
<td>3 (174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>4 (194)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>3 (14)</td>
<td>4 (209)</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>4 (18)</td>
<td>4 (205)</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>5 (279)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>7 (31)</td>
<td>12 (617)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>27 (122)</td>
<td>16 (835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99 (452)</td>
<td>100 (5,334)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percents may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The number of words per recording unit was similar among organizations, with a mean number of words per recording unit ranging from 55 to 71 depending on the organization, which exemplified how the selection of recording units created units more comparable to one another than sampling units (entire documents). These data are presented in Table 6.
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6 - 542</td>
<td>65 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5 - 421</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7 - 271</td>
<td>64 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 - 238</td>
<td>67 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4 - 377</td>
<td>70 (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>10 - 351</td>
<td>69 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>12 - 385</td>
<td>60 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>4 - 295</td>
<td>61 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>2 - 424</td>
<td>64 (38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of words analyzed per organization ranged from 11,043 (Organization D) to 104,084 (Organization B), with a mean number of 34,664 words analyzed per organization (SD=29,164). The following sections report the results of the content analysis conducted for each organization. This is followed by the results of the collective analysis.

**Individual Content Analysis by Organization**

Results of communicated values frequencies showed a mean of 5,394 value occurrences per organization (SD=3,900). Organization D had the least number of value occurrences (n=2,224) within the recording units analyzed, and Organization B the most (n=14,177). In general the percentage of total words that were identified as values was similar across organizations. On average, 16.86% of the words analyzed per organization were identified as value terms (SD=2.53) (Table 7).
Table 7

Representation of Values within the Total Words Analyzed by Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Total words analyzed (n)</th>
<th>Percentage of words identified as values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>52,250</td>
<td>16.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>104,084</td>
<td>13.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>30,200</td>
<td>15.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>11,043</td>
<td>20.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>13,064</td>
<td>21.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>14,700</td>
<td>17.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>14,191</td>
<td>18.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>16,740</td>
<td>15.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>37,378</td>
<td>13.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>52,987</td>
<td>15.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>34,664 (29,164)</td>
<td>16.86% (2.53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative frequencies for each of the 36 values indicate the proportion of each communicated value within the total frequency of value occurrences for each organization. All 36 communicated values were represented at least once in each organization’s communications materials with the exception of “world at peace” for Organizations A, E, and F, and “clean” for Organizations D, E, and F. Although results provided individual sets of data for each organization, the distribution of values is similar across organizations. Terminal values appeared to be slightly more-communicated than instrumental values overall. These data are presented in Table 8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminal values</th>
<th>A (n)</th>
<th>B (n)</th>
<th>C (n)</th>
<th>D (n)</th>
<th>E (n)</th>
<th>F (n)</th>
<th>G (n)</th>
<th>H (n)</th>
<th>I (n)</th>
<th>J (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1: Comfortable life</td>
<td>2 (210)</td>
<td>2 (269)</td>
<td>2 (90)</td>
<td>5 (130)</td>
<td>1 (34)</td>
<td>1 (35)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (25)</td>
<td>1 (71)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2: Exciting life</td>
<td>2 (206)</td>
<td>4 (502)</td>
<td>3 (151)</td>
<td>3 (65)</td>
<td>7 (263)</td>
<td>4 (97)</td>
<td>3 (79)</td>
<td>3 (160)</td>
<td>3 (216)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3: Sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>3 (229)</td>
<td>3 (468)</td>
<td>2 (74)</td>
<td>3 (58)</td>
<td>3 (93)</td>
<td>2 (58)</td>
<td>2 (38)</td>
<td>2 (62)</td>
<td>4 (184)</td>
<td>6 (469)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4: World of peace</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (13)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (19)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (2)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5: World of beauty</td>
<td>&lt;1 (55)</td>
<td>2 (222)</td>
<td>2 (92)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (16)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (18)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (18)</td>
<td>1 (28)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (14)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (47)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6: Equality</td>
<td>4 (358)</td>
<td>4 (537)</td>
<td>2 (114)</td>
<td>2 (51)</td>
<td>5 (150)</td>
<td>4 (95)</td>
<td>5 (127)</td>
<td>3 (73)</td>
<td>4 (230)</td>
<td>2 (171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7: Family security</td>
<td>10 (903)</td>
<td>13 (1,858)</td>
<td>14 (653)</td>
<td>16 (348)</td>
<td>8 (225)</td>
<td>14 (378)</td>
<td>23 (594)</td>
<td>18 (477)</td>
<td>11 (552)</td>
<td>4 (316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8: Freedom</td>
<td>2 (167)</td>
<td>2 (214)</td>
<td>3 (135)</td>
<td>1 (32)</td>
<td>1 (32)</td>
<td>2 (39)</td>
<td>1 (38)</td>
<td>1 (32)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (50)</td>
<td>2 (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9: Happiness</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (2)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (6)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (14)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10: Inner harmony</td>
<td>1 (112)</td>
<td>1 (202)</td>
<td>3 (119)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (21)</td>
<td>1 (29)</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (63)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T11: Mature love</td>
<td>1 (122)</td>
<td>1 (204)</td>
<td>1 (56)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>2 (43)</td>
<td>1 (35)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>2 (54)</td>
<td>2 (79)</td>
<td>1 (99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12: National security</td>
<td>&lt;1 (24)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (70)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (2)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (14)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (5)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T13: Pleasure</td>
<td>&lt;1 (41)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (83)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (16)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
<td>2 (50)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (21)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T14: Salvation</td>
<td>&lt;1 (46)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (17)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (45)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (11)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (7)</td>
<td>2 (81)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T15: Self-respect</td>
<td>&lt;1 (22)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (29)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (5)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (7)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16: Social recognition</td>
<td>7 (619)</td>
<td>7 (1,018)</td>
<td>3 (149)</td>
<td>5 (119)</td>
<td>5 (130)</td>
<td>4 (113)</td>
<td>7 (191)</td>
<td>7 (194)</td>
<td>6 (288)</td>
<td>21 (1,682)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T17: True friendship</td>
<td>9 (771)</td>
<td>9 (1,251)</td>
<td>8 (390)</td>
<td>16 (344)</td>
<td>13 (360)</td>
<td>17 (452)</td>
<td>9 (242)</td>
<td>5 (137)</td>
<td>10 (524)</td>
<td>11 (909)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T18: Wisdom</td>
<td>2 (177)</td>
<td>5 (732)</td>
<td>3 (165)</td>
<td>2 (47)</td>
<td>2 (43)</td>
<td>2 (46)</td>
<td>2 (45)</td>
<td>2 (42)</td>
<td>4 (199)</td>
<td>1 (105)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table continued on next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental values</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1: Ambitious</td>
<td>8 (727)</td>
<td>8 (1,091)</td>
<td>6 (301)</td>
<td>10 (212)</td>
<td>11 (311)</td>
<td>8 (220)</td>
<td>5 (120)</td>
<td>7 (192)</td>
<td>11 (553)</td>
<td>13 (1,111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2: Broadminded</td>
<td>&lt;1 (69)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (44)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (31)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (25)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (21)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (32)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (24)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3: Capable</td>
<td>2 (149)</td>
<td>3 (355)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (40)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>2 (60)</td>
<td>2 (49)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (24)</td>
<td>2 (60)</td>
<td>2 (111)</td>
<td>3 (205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4: Cheerful</td>
<td>&lt;1 (24)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (107)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (46)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
<td>1 (28)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (19)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (28)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5: Clean</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (7)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (4)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6: Courageous</td>
<td>&lt;1 (43)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (60)</td>
<td>2 (95)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (17)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (6)</td>
<td>2 (81)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7: Forgiving</td>
<td>&lt;1 (11)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (27)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (2)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (7)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (11)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8: Helpful</td>
<td>23 (1,959)</td>
<td>19 (2,719)</td>
<td>21 (993)</td>
<td>20 (435)</td>
<td>26 (707)</td>
<td>22 (587)</td>
<td>23 (598)</td>
<td>23 (607)</td>
<td>18 (972)</td>
<td>18 (1,502)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9: Honest</td>
<td>1 (101)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (73)</td>
<td>1 (51)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (19)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (5)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (5)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (12)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (21)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I10: Imaginative</td>
<td>1 (116)</td>
<td>2 (258)</td>
<td>2 (104)</td>
<td>2 (42)</td>
<td>2 (45)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>1 (27)</td>
<td>1 (56)</td>
<td>2 (176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I11: Independent</td>
<td>1 (93)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (105)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (31)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (19)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (21)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (25)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>2 (78)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I12: Intellectual</td>
<td>5 (458)</td>
<td>4 (607)</td>
<td>3 (147)</td>
<td>2 (40)</td>
<td>2 (65)</td>
<td>3 (81)</td>
<td>4 (115)</td>
<td>3 (70)</td>
<td>4 (209)</td>
<td>3 (269)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I13: Logical</td>
<td>4 (315)</td>
<td>2 (304)</td>
<td>2 (71)</td>
<td>3 (65)</td>
<td>2 (45)</td>
<td>2 (41)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (20)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (23)</td>
<td>2 (112)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I14: Loving</td>
<td>2 (154)</td>
<td>2 (257)</td>
<td>6 (300)</td>
<td>1 (24)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (23)</td>
<td>2 (62)</td>
<td>3 (71)</td>
<td>8 (201)</td>
<td>2 (110)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I15: Obedient</td>
<td>2 (205)</td>
<td>1 (164)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (33)</td>
<td>2 (40)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (26)</td>
<td>1 (29)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (16)</td>
<td>2 (97)</td>
<td>2 (195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I16: Polite</td>
<td>&lt;1 (61)</td>
<td>1 (164)</td>
<td>3 (129)</td>
<td>1 (23)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (6)</td>
<td>1 (30)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (22)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (45)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I17: Responsible</td>
<td>&lt;1 (79)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (80)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (33)</td>
<td>1 (24)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (22)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (25)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (6)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (46)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I18: Self-control</td>
<td>&lt;1 (47)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (46)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (31)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (8)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (3)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (26)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 (8,692)</td>
<td>100 (14,177)</td>
<td>100 (4,728)</td>
<td>100 (2,224)</td>
<td>100 (2,765)</td>
<td>100 (2,642)</td>
<td>100 (2,618)</td>
<td>100 (2,614)</td>
<td>100 (5,183)</td>
<td>100 (8,298)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When communicated values were ranked in order of relative frequencies for each organization, a set of five values clearly stood out for each organization. A combination or balance of both terminal and instrumental values was noted for each organization. The five most-frequently communicated values represented for each organization are presented in Table 9, and are based on relative frequencies ranging from 4% ("social recognition" for Organization F) to 26% ("helpful" for Organization F). All organizations possessed “helpful” and “family security” in their top-five values. The values “ambitious” and “true friendship” appeared for nine out of 10 organizations; “social recognition” appeared for eight out of 10 organizations.

Table 9
Dominant Communicated Values by Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Top-five communicated values in order from highest to lowest relative frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) true friendship, 4) ambitious, 5) social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) true friendship, 4) ambitious, 5) social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) true friendship, 4) ambitious, 5) loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) true friendship, 4) ambitious, 5) social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) true friendship, 3) ambitious, 4) family security, 5) equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) true friendship, 3) family security, 4) ambitious, 5) social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) true friendship, 4) social recognition, 5) equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) family security, 3) loving, 4) social recognition, 5) ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1) helpful, 2) ambitious, 3) family security, 4) true friendship, 5) social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>1) social recognition, 2) helpful, 3) ambitious, 4) true friendship, 5) sense of accomplishment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Terminal values are not italicized; instrumental values are italicized.

**Collective Analysis**

To examine the data collectively, means were calculated for each of the 36 communicated values’ relative frequencies. When terminal and instrumental communicated values were ranked from highest to lowest mean relative frequency, three values had relative frequency percentages in the double-digits: “helpful” (21.30%), “family security” (13.08%), and
“true friendship” (10.71%). Values fell into one of three tiers (Table 10). The first tier, or the most-communicated values that clearly stood out from the rest, are represented by mean relative frequencies greater than 7% and are: 1) “helpful,” 2) “family security,” 3) “true friendship,” 4) “ambitious,” and 5) “social recognition.” The three terminal values represented in the first tier are indicative of disability organizations that work to enhance supportive networks (i.e., “family security” and “true friendship”) and individual opportunities (i.e., “social recognition”). The two instrumental values in the first tier are common to most nonprofit organizations (i.e., “helpful” and “ambitious”).

First-tier values were expressed in a variety of ways. For example, the following recording unit, which is an excerpt from an organization’s brochure, was coded as communicating the first-tier values “ambitious,” “helpful,” and “true friendship”:

We believe the structure in which we work and support people with disabilities must respond to the following imperatives:

• That people with disabilities are living the lives they want to live, are healthy and happy and have meaningful relationships.
• That people with disabilities have opportunities for generating income.
• That people with disabilities are participating citizens of their communities.
• That communication is clear and consistent.
• That people with disabilities are able to voice their concerns and take action with our support when needed or requested.
• That the system works for people with disabilities rather than controlling them.
• That people with disabilities must be afforded the dignity of taking risks.
• That people with disabilities are the primary decision-makers in their lives and must be supported and encouraged to identity and realize their dreams.
• That dollars allotted be used wisely to help build a positive future for people being supported.

The following passage, which was a recording unit from a letter in a direct mail piece, was coded as communicating the first-tier values “family security,” “social recognition,” and “true friendship.” The organization’s Executive Director writes:

When I returned to [the organization] I FELT what participants tell me over and over again. This place IS different. The way we care for individuals and their families and
friends is vastly different from what hospitals do…it’s the difference between night and day.

The second tier, with mean relative frequencies falling in the range of 1% to 3.58%, was represented by a set of 15 values. The values in this tier include “equality,” “sense of accomplishment,” “logical,” and “inner harmony.”

Terminal values were communicated only slightly more frequently than instrumental values in the first two tiers; there was a relatively equal emphasis on values representing end-states such as “family security” and “social recognition” and day-to-day values such as “helpful,” “intellectual,” and “capable.” It was interesting to note that the representation of “equality” and “capable” was not greater, as these values are highly relevant to the disability organizations based on the literature reviewed in this dissertation.

The third tier, or values communicated least often with mean relative frequencies less than 1% included 16 values such as “world of beauty,” “courageous,” “broadminded,” and “happiness.” There were slightly more instrumental than terminal communicated values in this tier, and it was interesting that some values most-often associated with disability advocacy, such as “independent” and “self-respect” did not have greater mean relative frequencies. In addition, it was surprising that the value “broadminded” was not noted more often based on the fact that disability-related organizations are probably revered by others as open and accepting organizations. The values “responsible” and “honest” are also probably associated with most nonprofit organizations that work selflessly for social causes, but did not appear frequently.
Table 10
Mean Relative Frequencies of Communicated Values for All Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicated value</th>
<th>Mean relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8: Helpful</td>
<td>21.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7: Family security</td>
<td>13.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T17: True friendship</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I1: Ambitious</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16: Social recognition</td>
<td>7.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6: Equality</td>
<td>3.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I12: Intellectual</td>
<td>3.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2: Exciting life</td>
<td>2.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3: Sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I14: Loving</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T18: Wisdom</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1: Comfortable life</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3: Capable</td>
<td>1.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I13: Logical</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8: Freedom</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I10: Imaginative</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T11: Mature love</td>
<td>1.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I15: Obedient</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10: Inner harmony</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I16: Polite</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table continued on next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicated value</th>
<th>Mean relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5: World of beauty</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I11: Independent</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6: Courageous</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2: Broadminded</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I17: Responsible</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4: Cheerful</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9: Honest</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T14: Salvation</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T13: Pleasure</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I18: Self-control</td>
<td>0.37 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12: National security</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T15: Self-respect</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7: Forgiving</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9: Happiness</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4: World of peace</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5: Clean</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This quantitative content analysis revealed a clear set of values that are communicated by local disability organizations. Although each organization has its own set of five values that are most communicated, the differences from one organization and the next are minute. Disability organizations present themselves collectively as helpful, ambitious organizations that believe in the values associated with family, friendship, and being deserving of respect and recognition. In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis was conducted with interviews of organizational leaders to address RQ3. Qualitative analysis was used to assess perceived organizational identity and results are reported in the next section.
Method #2: Interpretive Assessment of Perceived Values

Ten of the 12 interview participants are women, and job titles varied, from Director of Communications to Coordinator to President/CEO. Table 11 details the pseudonyms, gender, and job title of each participant. The following sections detail the Epoche process and a phenomenological analysis of the interview data, which was completed in a total of four steps.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Assigned pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Job title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chapter and Advocacy Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Director of Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Jennifer Claire</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Communications Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Angela Debra</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Development Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>President/CEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 1: The Epoche Process

The first step before a phenomenological analysis can be undertaken is to accurately “set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated,” also know as the Epoche process (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). This section details my personal investment in this research:

I acknowledge previously in Chapter 4 that a limitation of this particular interviewing process was discovered when I found my own motivations becoming illuminated. I certainly
have ideas about the kind of messages disability-related organizations should be communicating. Personal issues that entered into the interviewing process may be related to the fact that 1) I have spent much time working with disability populations in a variety of capacities such as direct care, clinical counseling, and research, 2) I fundamentally believe that organizations that serve disability populations should be driven by “positive” values and adhere to basic ethical principles in their communication efforts, and 3) organizations should not only work on specific service-oriented goals – such as education and programs – but on larger goals such as increasing societal awareness and reducing stigma or discrimination.

My experience with Organization C in the interview process is a great example of the effects of personal biases on qualitative inquiry. One of the main purposes of the organization is to provide personal support and services to persons with cancer, and not necessarily to reduce the stigma attached to those with cancer. People coping and living with cancer often face specific adversity, based on physical and emotional changes as well as the negative public perceptions of specific types of cancer such as lung cancer. During the interview process I found myself desperately wanting to hear that the organization had a heightened focus on equality and stigma-related communication that would reach an audience broader than the cancer community, but this revelation did not surface. I knew at that very moment the importance of writing out my own personal biases before I even began to look at the transcript. I was concerned that I would scrutinize the transcript for my own point of view, knowing all along that it actually was not there! I also knew I must recognize that good organizations are created to serve a large variety of missions and purposes; this perceived “neglect” to fight against stigma does not make the organization inherently a “bad” one.

To reduce the effect of such personal biases on the analysis of my interview transcripts, I wrote out the three preconceived ideas – just as I have typed them here – and referred to them
throughout my analysis. I also wrote notes about how I am often inclined to react to others who
do not operate from the exact mold of my own personal belief system. For example, I know
from personal experience when I describe some of my past disability work to others, it truly
perplexes them: i.e., “How in the world could you do such challenging and/or depressing
work?” These reactions to my stories truly perplex me. Therefore, I recognize my position as a
disability activist and someone who has been fortunate to have a plethora of interactions with
persons with disabilities—both good and bad interactions. These interactions, to me at least, are
no different than interactions with anyone else. Yet, I recognize that many people have not had
the range of personal experience from which I draw.

In summary, I certainly have my own personal interpretation of the disability culture and
how persons with disabilities should be viewed; I believe persons with disabilities are not
“charity cases,” “disadvantaged,” or in desperate need of a “better life.” I also believe that
disability organizations should work to enhance lives rather than “fix” them. At the end of this
process, I also noted the particular value sets that I hold dear and would expect from others who
want to serve disability populations, including the desire for equality, freedom, and social
recognition. I identified a set of values I expect disability organizations to uphold. For example,
it seems obvious to me that these organizations should want to be helpful, honest, loving, and
responsible organizations.

The Epoche process was enlightening, and it was with this list of convictions that I dove
into my data. Because I was able to acknowledge and accept my own personal feelings – and
then make a conscious effort to release these feelings and their accompanying biases – I felt
prepared to handle situations in which I knew my disability activist “radar” would go up during
the analysis process. My challenge was to accurately represent the true voices of my participants.
According to Moustakas (1994), I was ready to “enter with hope and intention of seeing...with
new and receptive eyes” (p. 89). The next section describes the results of steps 2 and 3: horizontalization and variation.

**Steps 2 and 3: Horizontalization and Variation**

Six essential themes were produced through the reduction process which included horizontalization and variation of the data. The first four themes summarize the values participants believe to be important to their organizations and are textural descriptions of the phenomena experienced. The last two themes describe how values structures are experienced by participants, and present structural descriptions of the experience of values.

*Theme #1: Organizations have a responsibility to be a valuable source of information.*

Although organizational leaders expressed that they had strong sense of obligation to provide quality services, they more often emphasized their roles as the “best sources” of valuable information for a variety of publics. Leaders discussed their own excellence as educators and their expertise in understanding the specific nuances of the populations they serve. Leaders expressed a desire to be valued for their organizations’ abilities to recognize and meet the educational needs of their 1) consumers or potential consumers, 2) family members or others affected by disability, and 3) the local community and the public at large.

Leaders pride themselves in being able to provide the most up-to-date, accurate, and encompassing information about the disabilities they support. For example, Matthew, from Organization B, said, “We feel we are the best source and we’ve got the most comprehensive amount of information [on autism].” Jennifer, from Organization C stated, “We’re not experts at everything, but we know how to get them to maybe particular group or suggest other things.” She also acknowledged that despite being a smaller organization, “Most people are surprised by how much we offer.”
Leaders also expressed the commitment to being a resource for family members and others affected by disability. Adam, from Organization F, stated:

We understand mental illness. We understand what it’s like for families who have a loved one with mental illness. So we want to...we definitely want to communicate that we do understand and we also want to promote understanding.... We have a great deal of knowledge about mental health.

Debra, from Organization G, said that she hoped their publics understood one very important message: “We’re here. We’re here for the parents. We’re here to listen and try and meet their needs.” Angela described Organization G’s newsletter as having “tons of information on what we do have to offer our families.”

Organizational leaders expressed a responsibility to educate the community about the virtues of understanding and acceptance. Laura, from Organization A, said her organization strives to “educate the community that people with disabilities have a lot to offer. They’re not takers, they’re also givers.” George, from Organization J stated, “I think one of the main things that [Organization J] is trying to do is bring an awareness to the public at large that folks with intellectual disabilities are no different than the ‘regular population.’” Melinda, from Organization E, with regard to the value of acceptance, said, “And...what I mean by acceptance is really educating the community about acceptance.” In summary, organizations want to fill any information gaps to increase understanding and awareness for a variety of publics. The next theme details the value of relationships.

**Theme #2: Organizational goals are realized through multiple relationships and a sense of connectedness.**

Leaders believe that the roles their organizations play in creating and facilitating relationships are “fundamental” to their missions. Relationships were recognized on both an individual and organizational level. Kathryn, from Organization D, believes the “biggest needs” of persons with disabilities is to have relationships. In a description of how the challenges of disabilities can be overcome, she said, “It’s all about the relationships with people.”
Relationships at the organizational level were described – for example – according to Laura, from Organization A as “partnerships and collaborations” with other institutions. According to Adam, from Organization F, the goal of “coalition building” within the community is fundamental to success. Relationships were articulated more specifically by participants in the context of family, community, and friendship.

First, leaders recognized the value of family, whether it involves 1) families in decision-making about the organizational services provided or their loved ones needs, 2) providing family-based education, or 3) connecting one family to another. Kathryn said that family members help guide decisions about the types of programs Organization D offers. She stated, “One of [our] guiding principles is that people with disabilities and their family members are the experts in our opinion.” Laura, from Organization A, described family connections as fundamental to her organization’s purpose. She said, “I think the most important thing we do is connect families to each other.” Jennifer, from Organization C said that her organization communicates the “idea that [we’re] not only here for [people with cancer] but for their family members and anyone else dealing with cancer.” Madeline, from Organization H, discussed family in the context of values and said, “Family is a huge part of what’s going on here.”

Second, leaders described the emphasis their organizations place on creating a sense of community connectedness. A variety of groups were mentioned in discussions of community: consumers, family members of consumers, policy makers, schools and other institutions, other health or disability-related organizations, or affiliates of their own organizations. Leaders felt that their organizations exist to bridge communities and create supports for disability which leads to more sustainable organizations. When Adam, from Organization F, was asked what his organization stood for, he responded, “I think we stand for an inclusive community. We stand for a community where it is a tolerant and accepting place for people to talk about mental health
and to get care for mental health disorders when they arise.” He also believes that his organization values “having relationships with different community partners.” George, from Organization J, stated, “It says a lot for [our state] as a community I think because the families have done a great job to make sure that [Organization J] exists in our community.”

Community was also used to denote that people with disabilities deserve to live and thrive within their communities. Leaders value persons with disabilities as important and contributing members of the community. From example, Laura stated that one of the main messages Organization A should communicate is that “people with disabilities do have gifts to share and bring to the community.” Kathryn, from Organization D, exclaimed, “I’ve got to work to make this dream come true of people having better opportunities to live in these environments and give their gifts back to the community,” and, “people with disabilities have a lot to contribute and are worth it as citizens.”

In addition, most leaders expressed a fundamental belief that people with disabilities lead better lives when they are fully included or integrated in their communities. Melinda, from Organization E, said, “We really try and link [people with disabilities] to resources to help them live the kind of lives that we all want to live in their communities…. We’re about inclusion.” Matthew, from Organization B, expressed a divergent point of view when he said:

Well, some people think people should be fully included…. Everyone should be included. Everyone should be in the community. Well, there are some people that, because of behavioral issues and aggression, that they can’t be. And sometimes families don’t want that. And, you know, other people may feel that self determination is the way to go but our population can’t always make informed decisions…

He iterated another point of view, however, with the later comment that people with autism “should be able to, to what degree they can, have a decision in where they live, what they do, whether they want to work, let them be in a community versus a restrictive environment.” This
second statement was more congruent with other participant views that people with disabilities should be included in the community to the full extent that this is possible.

Third, leaders expressed the importance of friendship. Friendship is represented by a variety of relationships that leaders believe their organizations should support: peer to peer, mentor to mentored, volunteer to consumer, etc. For example, Kathryn, from Organization D, described how her organization works to build “personal and social” networks for people with disabilities. These networks are based on mutual interests and hobbies, rather than service needs. Adam, from Organization F, described his organization as being “pretty big on the peer support model…. It allows us to have, I think, more personal relationships.”

In summary, leaders believe that relationships – whether family-, community-, or friendship-based – are essential for these organizations to meet their goals. As Kathryn, from Organization D, said, “Relationships are really fundamental to making things happen.” The next theme details the value of the individual.

Theme #3: Persons with disabilities are individuals, and like all individuals, they have abilities, choices, rights, and voices that deserve to be heard.

Leaders explained that their organizations focus on meeting individual needs and recognizing the unique nature of each person. Laura, from Organization A, described people with disabilities as individuals “just like you and I” who deserve opportunity and respect. Jessica, from Organization C, believes that her organization’s most-important value is the “idea that each person is deserving of support and nurture and [we want] to respect individuals.” Madeline, of Organization H, stated, when discussing values, “At the top is the dignity of every individual.”

The respondents wove the concepts of abilities, choices, and rights throughout conversations about people with disabilities being individuals. Matthew, from Organization B, when talking about individuals with autism, stated, “Everybody, no matter what their
functioning level, can make some kind of contribution.” Most leaders emphasized the need to dispel the myth that people with disabilities do not have potential or are not capable of accomplishing much for themselves. Kathryn, from Organization D, said, “People with disabilities have the right to take risks, and there’s dignity in risk.” Melinda, from Organization E believes that “people with disabilities are fully capable of directing their own lives, of making their own choices. We can facilitate that but really they are in charge of their own decisions.” Several leaders recognized the role of people with disabilities in contributing to decisions regarding their own needs or organizational offerings. As stated in the previous section, Kathryn, from Organization D, views consumers with disabilities as the “experts” in identifying what they need. Laura, from Organization A, and Melinda, from Organization E, both emphasized the value of placing people with disabilities on their organizations’ governing boards.

Most leaders described people with disabilities as normal people who have dreams and aspirations, as well as the typical desires for friendships, jobs, and comfortable places to live. For example, Melinda, from Organization E, made the statement, “We’re very interested in placing people [with disabilities] in jobs that they are interested in that pay them real money and give them opportunity to grow their careers.” She recognized that this belief is in line with what all people typically desire. Kathryn, from Organization D stated, “People with disabilities are more similar than different from everyone else.” She added:

We want to be understood for our efforts to help people with disabilities just be involved in the community to the extent that they want to be…. A lot of times people haven’t had the choice in where they live and how they live.

Leaders linked abilities and choices to the rights of individuals with disabilities. Laura, from Organization A, echoed the same sentiment of most participants when she said, “People with disabilities are people entitled to the same rights/privileges as any other person in the entire world.” Melinda described human rights as one of her organization’s main messages. She said,
“Part of what we want to communicate is – and it kind of gets into human-rights issues – but really self determination on the part of our consumers and the idea of true inclusiveness of all citizens.”

The data analysis further revealed that individual abilities, choices, and rights were smaller pieces of the larger concept of voice. Laura, from Organization A, in reference to people with disabilities, said, “There’s no such thing as a person who doesn’t have a voice.” Often the concept of voice was related to “empowerment” and “telling the impact of the organization” on personal growth. For example, Jennifer, from Organization C, described a program provided by her organization in which people affected by cancer are asked to submit stories of their individual experiences. She said, “It’s about their journey and it’s nice to see that…they are getting the opportunity to have this, to sort of share their story.” Organization I sponsors a specific program in which individuals who experience mental illness and have difficulty talking about their experiences are trained – as described by Elizabeth – to “find their voice[s].” These individuals are paid by the organization to tell their stories within church group meetings, student gatherings, and other educational forums. Elizabeth said that this program is a “way to fight the stigma that people think [mental illness is] something to be ashamed of.” George, from Organization J, also described a similar speaking program designed to help individuals with disabilities recognize their own senses of value or worth. Laura reiterated her sentiments in a conversation about the concept of voice:

A person who may only be able to communicate by gaze, [but] chances are they may be able to make a decision between spinach and chocolate cake with their eye gaze, so don’t tell me you’re speaking for that person. I hate when people say, ‘We’re speaking for people who have no voice.’ I like to think of Organization A doing more as empowering people to use their voice.
Madeline, from Organization H, however, described the population her organization serves as “people who are not able to speak for themselves.” This statement represented a slightly different point of view than the majority of participants who talked about voice.

In addition to voice, the leaders also discussed the concept of empowerment. This theme is discussed next.

Theme #4: Organizations are loving providers of support and advocacy, which results in empowerment.

Despite the fact that leaders recognize people with disabilities as capable individuals, they also believe that their organizations are founded on the belief that people with disabilities may need help or support. Madeline, from Organization H, said the consumers of her organization, who are mostly people with severe and profound developmental and physical disabilities, are “certainly not able to advocate for themselves.” Support was described in many ways—from providing information to programming or direct services. The concept of support was described as fundamental to most of the organizations’ missions. Kathryn, from Organization D stated this contention simply when she said, “The mission of our organization is to support people with developmental and other disabilities to be fully involved and contributing members of their communities” (emphasis added). Laura, from Organization A, said that one of the most-important messages she hopes her organization communicates is that “some people with disabilities will need support to enable them to access the ‘American Dream’ and we have a responsibility as human beings to provide the supports that they need.” Laura also described the commitment of providing support when she said, “Bottom line, if you need some type of support, chances are we support you or we figure out where you need to go.”

Respondents believe that the supportive function stems from their individual beliefs that all individuals with disabilities – or their family members – should be loved and deserve the best lives possible. Leaders also emphasized the importance of upholding values such as patience,
empathy, compassion, hope, and encouragement when implementing support. In describing the support that Organization G provides to families through peer-to-peer contacts, Debra said,

> When we match someone with a parent who’s been down that road, we have them come through a training program and we’re coaching on how to provide the best support. So we’re coaching them on how to offer hope and encouragement without overloading…without being too negative.

Madeline, from Organization H stated, “This is a place of compassion.” Elizabeth, from Organization I, however, did not necessarily want to be perceived in this kind of softer light. In particular, she felt the term “compassion” sounded too “pensive” for her advocacy-based organization and stated, “I think [compassion] is the basic belief but we want to take it to more of a ‘Rah, rah! Let’s restore rights! Let’s get services!’…It’s not just compassion…. I feel like, yes, we care, but we care because we’re going to do it in a way that we do something that makes their lives better.”

In discussing why advocacy is important for mental illness issues, Elizabeth, from Organization I, said, “We need to wrap our arms around all our citizens and empower them to be the best they can be, and I think not to do so is discriminatory for a nation that’s based on democracy and rights.” Laura, from Organization A, described advocacy as “speaking on behalf of a person, a group, a system, to evoke change, to protect rights. It’s empowerment.”

Therefore, whether it is support or advocacy that is fundamental to the mission, leaders recognized both as channels for empowerment. For example, Debra, from Organization G said, “one of the ways that families are empowered is they’re having access to good information.” Along the same lines, Madeline, from Organization H, said that by providing support “there is a sense of empowerment because we finally give [families] the tools necessary for them to be able to speak on their children’s behalf.” Support is also noted by Madeline as a way to “maximize the potential of each individual.” Melinda, from Organization E, believed that, “The most
powerful thing we can do, and this is what we’re doing anyway, is empowering people to tell
their own stories and take charge of their own lives.”

The first four themes indicate what values the leaders believe are important to their
organizations. The next two themes are related to how individuals experience values structures
within their organizations.

Theme #5: Values and a sense of purpose must be shared among all those invested in the organization.

Organizational leaders described the importance of communicating within the
organization so that all members understand the core beliefs or values of the organization.
Leaders believe that their organizations are guided by their own membership, and a consensus
on organizational purpose is fundamental to sustainability. Board members, parents, volunteers,
and consumers are all governing members of their organizations who may dictate the directions
their organizations take, they said. For example, Laura, from Organization A, stated, “We are
governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. More than 85 percent of the Board are people with
disabilities or families of people with disabilities, and it is a strong governing Board.”

Participants also believe that their staffs are particularly responsible for accurately
understanding and representing organizational values and purpose. Matthew, from Organization
B, described how others perceive his organization based on the performance of his employees.
The public, he said, “make their judgment on our organization based on what they see…based
on how that [employee] acts.” He also thinks that employees should be responsible for
understanding what the organization stands for:

I have [staff] go back and look at the mission, the vision, the values…and that kind of
refocuses people…. This is who we are and this is what we believe in and this is what we
stand for. So if you’re working for this organization you need to understand and respect
this and remember it and take a refresher course every once in a while.

George described an exercise in which he would ask his staff to write out the mission statement
of Organization J to ensure that internal members of the organization were all educated and
available to spread the right message. He said, “So you really do have to every now and then slow down yourself and make sure that your key – and in this case, staff – people who were teaching the messaging even know the message. And not assume it.” George expressed the concern that even a well-established organization, like his own, can lose sight of fundamental organizational beliefs. This concern is described in more detail in the next theme, which is about the fluid nature of values and organizational identity.

**Theme #6: Values and organizational identity are “in flux.”**

Regardless of the fact that leaders want everyone on the same page with values and purpose, most organizational leaders described their organizations as being in periods of transition, often due to growth or changes in consumer needs. In order to respond to changes, the majority of participants reported that they were either: 1) working on revisions of strategic plans; 2) editing vision, mission, or values statements; 3) conducting audits or research to determine the strength of their communications efforts; or 4) reconsidering their brand identities. Jennifer summed up the gist of Theme #6 when she said about Organization C, “Things are in flux at this point.”

For example, several leaders were concerned about consistency in their messaging and how possible inconsistencies could affect their organizational identities. Melinda, from Organization E, expressed concern and said, “We need to centralize and we need to think about branding and we need to think about consistent messaging.” Laura described the efforts Organization A was taking to address some of its issues with consistent messaging. She hired a communications firm to help with the task and said that by “working with the whole rebranding campaign…it’s finding these inconsistencies and scrubbing them out.”

Leaders of organizations that must balance their identities as service providers and advocacy organizations shared their experiences and struggles. The need to generate revenue or
continue to receive state or federal funding, for example, may not always be in line with their
desires to focus on advocacy. According to Laura, from Organization A, advocacy services do
not receive much funding. Several leaders discussed the need to rely more on private versus
public funding in order to keep their identities as advocacy-oriented organizations intact, and to
avoid the trap of being a service provider only. Kathryn, from Organization D, said, “We’re
always looking to diversify funding…. We want to be less vulnerable to politics and changing
financial scenarios in the government.” Melinda described how the state “continues to cut
funding for [Organization E’s] population, making it nearly impossible to continue working.”
She said that her organization was particularly committed to creating “more-sustainable funding”
because it would keep the organization’s goals intact. She said, “We’ve got a strategic plan for
that…a development plan that will help us find more private and individual donors.” Adam,
from Organization F, described the trap nonprofit organizations get into when they rely on too
much state or federal funding, and reiterated the success he feels because his organization is
small enough that it can circumvent the pitfalls. He said that when organizations funded
primarily by state and federal funding “are advocating, their independence is really
compromised.”

Additionally, some leaders expressed relief in being able to stick to their missions as
advocacy organizations or organizations that do not have to balance conflicting interests related
to funding. For example, participants described the joy in being able to offer services free of
charge, and viewed this as a key component to their organizational identities. In regard to
providing all services for free, Jessica, from Organization C, said, “Services are free to anyone
affected by cancer…and that’s very consistently the message we want to get out.” Elizabeth,
from Organization I, stated, “We don’t see ourselves as a service provider and we’re shamefully
proud of that status…. We do it really for free.”
Although most organizational leaders discussed values and organizational identity as evolving concepts, leaders believe it is important to retain the founding principles of their organizations, even during periods of change. Laura, from Organization A, described the plethora of services her organization now provides but kept returning to describe how the organization started in a church basement with a couple of women trying to figure out how their children with disabilities would get into school. She emphasized that as Organization A expands, changes direction, and adapts to new needs, she is also “trying so hard all the time to make sure that we don’t forget that church basement because that is who we are.” Melinda reported the struggles Organization E may face by expanding services to people with mental illness, at-risk youth, and homeless individuals. “You know we have been around a really long time [about 20 years] and we have an excellent reputation and we worked for it,” she said. She also said she recognized how organizational changes could potentially affect Organization E’s identity in the years to come.

The six themes presented in this section are the result of horizontalization and variation steps of phenomenological analysis. These themes describe the values that leaders believe are important foundations as well as how the values are experienced by participants. The next section provides a synthesis of the analyzed data.

Step 4: Synthesis

The process of synthesizing the analyzed data provided an overall interpretation of how participants experience an organizational values structure. This section provides a summary of the participants’ experiences and reveals a “truth” constructed by evidence in each of the six themes developed.

Synthesis led to the truth that organizational values are individual- and issue-based. The organizational values structures experienced by leaders are based on their own individual beliefs
about the populations they serve. Organizational leaders have very strong personal connections
to disability; personal values arise from a love and respect of the individual with a disability and
the desire to create a world in which disability is embraced and accepted. Therefore, these
individual values are primarily issue-driven rather than defined by business principles. In other
words, individual values are formed based on the feelings leaders have about disability issues
such as the need for increased community awareness or individual advocacy; values are not
defined by the financial and ethical principles associated with running a sustainable business.
This revelation is supported by concepts discussed in each of the six themes presented in the
previous section. The supporting arguments discovered in each theme are summarized below.

Theme #1 emphasizes the role of organizations as sources of information about
disability. Leaders perceive their organizations and themselves to be the leading providers of
information about disability to consumers, families, and their communities. This belief that
organizations have a responsibility to meet educational needs is issue-driven.

Theme #2 explains how leaders’ emphasis on values of family, community, and
friendship build relationships. Leaders discussed relationships in two contexts. First, leaders
value the interpersonal relationships among individuals including members of the organization,
consumers, family members, and members of the community. Second, leaders recognize the
strength of relationships at the organizational level. Although these relationships may be initiated
because of business needs such as raising money, leaders focus more on cultivating long-term
relationships only if these relationships are good platforms for disability advocacy and
awareness. Organizational relationships are primarily built upon and maintained by shared values
that are issue-driven. Leaders want relationships first and foremost to support the disability
cause.
Theme #3 describes the beliefs individual leaders have about people with disabilities as individuals with abilities, choices, rights, and voices that deserve to be heard. These beliefs form the values upon which organizational decisions about services, programming, and communication are made. This theme exemplifies how values are individual- and issue-driven, rather than business-driven. For example, a business decision regarding a new program option would be driven by the fundamental belief that individuals with disabilities deserve the service, rather than the belief that the organization needs the service to generate additional revenue.

Theme #4 describes the beliefs organizational leaders have about their roles in assisting people with disabilities. The desires to provide support and advocacy, which they believe leads to empowerment, are based on the values each leader holds about people with disabilities. These individual- and issue-driven values about people with disabilities are the foundation of organizational missions and principles. Therefore, this theme also supports the notion that values are constructed originally by the individual and perpetuate the personal beliefs of organizational leaders. These individual-based values are implemented at the organizational level and are always issue-driven.

Theme #5 summarizes the leaders’ beliefs that values should be shared by all people invested in the organization. Leaders have a desire to cultivate shared values. Leaders believe that all members of the organization should be on the same page when it comes to beliefs about disability; individual commitments to the organization should stem from these shared ideas. This theme encapsulates the idea that individual- and issues-driven values can be the foundation of organizational stability when there is “strength in numbers.” Organizational leaders believe a mutual understanding of individual- and issues-driven values is very important to organizational sustainability and identity.
Theme #6 recognizes the changing nature of organizational identity. Although leaders noted some fluidity in how values are experienced, they also recognize the importance – first and foremost – of upholding the values upon which their organizations were originally based. Values are based on fundamental individual beliefs about the value, lives, and rights of persons with disabilities. Leaders believe that to lose this focus would be to jeopardize the integrity of the organization. For example, although there is some risk associated in basing organizational decisions on individual- and issue-driven values, leaders more often recognize the detriment of making decisions based primarily on business principles. If individual- and issue-driven values are neglected, leaders believe their personal commitments to their organizations would suffer. This loss of commitment would negatively affect the stability of the organization. Therefore, leaders believe the best way to respond to environmental changes is to have some flexibility, yet always retain a sense of understanding regarding the primary individual- and issues-driven values upon which the organization was originally created.

In summary, a values structure is experienced by organizational leaders as one that is built upon individual beliefs about people with disabilities. Organizational sustainability depends upon a commitment to operating from this values structure. Individual- and issue-driven values define organizational identity. The next section draws connections between the quantitative and qualitative results, and introduces a new concept: cause identity.

Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The qualitative results of this dissertation, which illuminated the values organizational leaders wish to project to others, should be examined in relationship to the quantitative results, which show the values organizations project in their communications materials. The first four textural themes identified in the interpretive analysis of interviews with organizational leaders identify the values organizational leaders believe to be important. These values are based on
individual- and issue-driven values leaders hold about disability: 1) organizations are the experts on disability—they know what publics need to understand; 2) interpersonal relationships are the building blocks that help people with disabilities and the organizations that serve them to achieve goals; 3) people with disabilities are capable individuals deserving of opportunity and respect; and 4) organizational leaders have an obligation to help and support persons with disabilities in a loving way, which leads to empowerment. The last two structural themes—although still important findings—relate more to how values are experienced and are not part of this comparison.

In the quantitative results, values emerged in tiers—first-tier values were communicated the most, and third-tier values, the least. When the four textural themes are compared with the quantitative results of this dissertation, or the values that organizations currently communicate, it is evident that the majority of first-tier values are also recognized consistently by organizational leaders as being fundamental to the organization. Leaders identified the importance of family, friendship, being helpful, and achieving social recognition for persons with disabilities, which are values that appeared most often in organizations' communication materials. Although less emphasized, the importance of ambition was expressed by leaders in their discussions related to the desires they have for their organizations to be leading organizations in providing information or services. Overall, these findings show that what organizational leaders believe to be important values are also communicated significantly in communications materials.

The qualitative analysis, however, illuminated some other fundamental values that are important to organizational leaders that do not come across as frequently in communications materials. Organizational leaders said they recognize the importance of people with disabilities being seen as capable individuals who should be treated equally. In addition, leaders believe their organizations to be important resources for that help persons with disabilities achieve personal
goals. These beliefs are related to second- and third-tier values such as “capable,” “equality,” “intellectual,” and “responsible.” Therefore, some of the values that may be just as important to leaders as being helpful and relationship-oriented (first-tier values) are not emphasized as often in communications materials. It should be noted, however, that all of the values organizational leaders believe to be important to their organizations are expressed to some extent in the communications materials they produce. Nonetheless, there are leader-emphasized values that appear less often in communication materials.

The values emerging from leader interviews and those identified in communication materials both reflect individual- and issue-driven values. Top-tier values are primarily related to individual views about people with disabilities and are issue-driven in that they illustrate the current state of how people with disabilities fit into American life. For example, organizations communicate that people with disabilities are important members of our society deserving of relationships and recognition. Organizations are committed to helping individuals achieve these goals.

An Expression of Unity

Results indicate that a collective identity for all 10 organizations included in this research exists. This collective identity – based on the large-scale cause of disability – was seen consistently in communications materials and emerged from all the leader interviews. Further, this identity reflects that organizations exist because they have strong beliefs about persons with disabilities and the issues that affect their quality of life. All 10 organizations are committed to one central cause, which is communicated through shared values. This singular focus, however, is not without its problems. The results of this research indicate how difficult it is to distinguish these organizations from one another based on values despite the fact that organizations have
distinct missions and goals. Therefore, this dissertation introduces the concept of “cause identity.”

**What is Cause Identity?**

The collective identity that emerged from the analysis of communications materials and interviews with organizational leaders is based on individual- and issue-driven values related to the disability cause. This collective identity is the genesis of a new, macro-level concept that unites organizations addressing a similar cause. A cause identity is built in response to a group of issues; cause identity creates a foundation from which an organization develops its purpose. Cause identity is defined as a collection of personal and emotional values that center around a strong commitment to a movement or set of principles. It is not based on business principles such as fiscal responsibility or service quality. Rather, it reflects the more-personal ideas organizations have in regard to a cause—in this case, disability. A cause identity not only represents a conglomeration of shared viewpoints on a collection of issues, but it constructs an ideology from which organizational decisions may be based.

The values expressed in communications materials are congruent with the values inherent in the first four themes identified through the interview analysis. For example, these organizations communicate that people with disabilities are deserving of relationships, and leaders expressed how their organizations are committed to facilitating relationship opportunities for people with disabilities. In addition, leaders want publics to know that their organizations are sources of support and information for the disability community; they are committed to communicating about larger-scale contributions to the disability movement. More specifically, leaders want to perpetuate the belief that persons with disabilities are contributing, important members of the community who deserve respect and opportunities.
A strong cause identity may legitimize disability issues – for example, the discrimination people with disabilities face in American society – for publics that these organizations target. Although organizational materials and leaders communicate business-oriented values such as honesty and responsibility, these values are not emphasized in the same manner that individual- and issue-driven values are. Rather, the cause identity is emphasized, which is based upon the personal feelings these individuals hold about the disability community and the desires individuals have to promote opportunity and change. Organizational decision making is based on the commitments organizational leaders feel toward the cause they support.

The presence of a strong cause identity has advantages for organizations as well as the disability community. First, organizations are unified in their advocacy for a particular cause or effort based upon mutual understanding of large-scale goals related to current disability issues. Second, cause identity brings legitimacy to individuals with disabilities as important members of the community. Organizations exist to promote awareness and spread ideas about disability issues that may ultimately lead the community to further embrace persons with disabilities. Third, cause identity illuminates the social, economic, and political issues that directly affect the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Cause identity is the foundation that creates an open forum for dialogue and change. It provides a sense of stability as organizations tackle ongoing issues in the public sphere.

There are, however, obvious disadvantages to operating an organization primarily based on a cause identity. A cause identity’s breadth does not illuminate the specific nuances of an organization’s mission and goals. As found in this study, there is a limited distinction for each organization when cause identity is the primary focus in communication. This shortcoming may prevent publics from understanding how one organization is unique or more beneficial than another organization in serving the particular needs of a specific disability population. When
organizations overemphasize a cause identity they may have difficulty emphasizing fundamental business principles – for example, financial responsibilities – that are more often associated with organizational stability. Although business principles often define what makes an organization an organization, these organizations do not adequately share how business principles serve the cause of disability.

In summary, a disability cause identity was formed because individuals hold strong feelings about people with disabilities and the multitude of issues, such as discrimination, financial burdens, and access to opportunity, that directly affect the disability community. Organizations with a cause identity exist to further the disability movement and have a positive impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. The next chapter answers the research questions posed by this dissertation and discusses cause identity as a concept that contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship.
Chapter 6: Discussion

The goal of this research was to examine the concept of organizational identity within an issues management framework and show how organizational identity may serve organizations that communicate about long-term issues related to disability. This study found that a group of local disability-related nonprofit organizations shared similar values, which may guide their abilities to communicate strategically with publics. Results indicate the presence of a distinct collective identity that is driven by individual beliefs and the issues important to the disability cause, such as the desire to help persons with disabilities achieve opportunity and social recognition. It is the collective nature of these individual- and issue-based values that led to the emergence of a new concept, cause identity. This chapter begins by answering the three research questions posed by this dissertation. It follows with a discussion about how the concept of cause identity may contribute to interdisciplinary scholarship. Suggestions for future research are also presented.

**Research Questions**

*RQ1: What are the communicated values of nonprofit organizations that serve persons with disabilities?*

This dissertation applied a custom values instrument to communication tools provided by 10 local, disability-related nonprofit organizations. Analysis indicated the presence of five most-important values for each organization (Table 9). When the five top values were examined for each organization, only a few deviations from a core set of collective values – discussed in the next section – existed. In fact, only eight of the 36 possible values were expressed in each organizations’ top-five values. The values most-communicated by each organization are the
terminal values of “equality,” “family security,” “sense of accomplishment,” “social recognition,” and “true friendship” and the instrumental values of “ambitious,” “helpful,” and “loving.”

Terminal values are end-state values that represent overarching goals (Rokeach, 1969, 1973, 1979). The terminal values that were most-communicated in organizational documents emphasize the importance of relationships, equal opportunity, making lasting contributions, and being recognized or admired for these accomplishments. Organizations are successfully communicating about progressive disability themes (Clogston, 1990, 1991, 1993; Haller 1995, 2000b) – such as equal access, public awareness, and independent living – through messages that address the role of disability in modern society. When organizations communicate progressive ideas, they focus more on the current issues affecting people with disabilities rather than the traditional idea that people with disabilities are disadvantaged or sick. The progressive nature of the top-five terminal values also may help these organizations effectively communicate about the value of persons with disabilities to society. This type of communication recognizes that disability as a concept may be socially constructed by publics (Clogston, 1989).

In addition to terminal values, the content analysis also showed that these organizations frequently communicate instrumental values that guide everyday activities and decision-making (Rokeach, 1969, 1973, 1979). Each organization had at least two of the three instrumental values – “ambitious,” “helpful,” and “loving” – as a part of its top-five, most-communicated values. In other words, these organizations typically communicate through their organizational documents that they are hard-working, loving, and committed to the welfare of others. These instrumental values communicate the responsibility organizations feel they have to serve persons with disabilities. Historically, “helping” has had a negative connotation among some disability advocates who saw it as a form of charity. They believe that communication efforts that portray persons with disabilities as victims or in need of help is viewed as media that perpetuates
patronizing or negative stereotypes (Dourado, 1990; Farnall & Smith, 1999; Riley, 2005). The results of this research, however, demonstrate that the value of being “helpful” is characterized by a variety of terms including “advocacy,” “encourage,” “guidance,” “strengthen,” and “support.” Therefore, although the value of “helpful” is rooted in charity and may be associated with patronizing persons with disabilities, communication of the value “helpful” appears to encompass a variety of more-progressive and empowering ideas than it has in the past. Overall, the values of “ambitious,” “helpful,” and “loving” relate to progressive disability themes (Clogston, 1990, 1991, 1993; Haller 1995, 2000b); values communicate that organizations want persons with disabilities to be better received by their communities.

These communicated instrumental values also relate to fundamental “do-good” goals common to most nonprofit organizations (e.g., Light, 2000; Wolf 1990). One of the challenges that nonprofit organizations may face by primarily communicating these values, however, is that it may be difficult for them to differentiate their identities from one another (Sargeant & Ford, 2007). Organizations do not differentiate from one another how they function as unique businesses. Business-oriented values such as “logical” or “responsible” are not communicated as frequently in organizations’ literature as issue-based values are.

Communication about individual- and issue-driven values may successfully create “zones of meaning” (Heath 1997) for organizations and their publics. This shared meaning ensures that publics stay engaged with the cause. Publics generally respond to issues that tap into their emotional, rather than rational, minds (Sargeant & Ford, 2007), and values that are founded on personal convictions about people with disabilities are laden with emotion (see Farnall & Smith, 1999; Levine, 2000; Riley, 2005).

In summary, the organizational identities that are communicated through values show that organizations are committed to creating a more-accepting world for people with disabilities.
Because organizations are able to strategically communicate about issues that directly affect the disability community, publics may be more motivated to connect with the cause. The next section discusses the role of a collective identity for disability organizations, and presents a discussion of the results when the core set of collective values for this group of organizations was examined.

**RQ2: What are the communicated values, if any, that this group of organizations share?**

As indicated by the discussion above, there was very little deviation from a core set of communicated values. When analyzed as a group, these organizations most often communicate the end-state or terminal values of “family security,” “true friendship,” and “social recognition” and the day-to-day instrumental values of “helpful” and “ambitious.” When communicated values were analyzed collectively for all 10 organizations, the values expressed fell into three tiers (Table 10). These findings support Brilliant and Young’s (2004) study that demonstrated the value of conducting an analysis of a group of organizations that possess similar characteristics. They determined that collective organizations must adapt their identities to the cultural context in which they are situated. A shared identity may allow these organizations to sustain issues together when environmental and social changes occur; it may be easier for the group of organizations to adapt because fundamental values are retained. For example, disability organizations must respond constantly to legislative changes that affect disability populations (American Association of People with Disabilities, 2007). A shared identity based on fundamental beliefs about a cause allows organizations to communicate consistently even when there are ongoing changes in the political environment.

Public communication is one way in which organizations communicate their beliefs and try to get publics to adopt similar ideas (Rice & Atkin, 2001). Because cause identity requires an expression of the emotional and personal values organizations possess in relation to a movement
or set of principles, an organization may use public communication to let publics know how the organization defines itself in relation to the cause, or what has been defined through this research as cause identity. This use of cause identity supports literature that says that public communication that aids in reform, for example, can break down barriers, as Singhal and Rogers (2003) purported in their work on communication about HIV/AIDS.

This research clearly identifies the central, distinct, and enduring qualities that a group of disability-related nonprofit organizations have in common. Albert and Whetten (1985) proposed that organizational identity is the foundation of what an organization is built upon. This research not only supports their definition, but applies it to a group of organizations that communicate about a common cause. A shared cause identity allows organizations to present a unified voice on their values, which may help sustain long-term issues such as fluctuations in legislation and health-care initiatives as well as popular collective beliefs others have about persons with disabilities. Although disability organizations respond to short-term issues – an example would be an unexpected cut in funding – long-term disability issues need to be on the public agenda in order to positively affect the overall disability movement.

Answering RQ1 and RQ2 through an analysis of projected values – or the values an organization communicates to others – led to the conclusion that organizations project a collective cause identity. Because a cause identity is built primarily upon the beliefs individuals have about persons with disabilities, this identity may be more enduring if there is an alignment between an organizations’ perceived values – or the values the organization wishes to communicate – and their projected values (Illia, et al., 2004). The next section discusses this relationship.
RQ3: What is the relationship between perceived and projected organizational identities among these organizations?

The relationship between perceived and projected identity was ascertained by comparing the quantitative results to the qualitative results. The majority of the values leaders wish to communicate – or the values that form a perceived organizational identity – were also noted in the values that are communicated in organizational documents – or the values that form a projected organizational identity. Perceived and projected values are individual and issue-driven values related to the disability cause; results also indicate that this type of value may help leaders make decisions for their organizations. This research supports Illia, et al.’s (2004) position that both perceived and projected elements of organizational identity are important to organizational stability within an issues management framework. Organizations in this research use their alignments in perceived and projected identity to adequately support the disability cause.

The collective projected identity, which was presented in the quantitative results section, is defined by terminal values related to “family security,” “true friendship,” and “social recognition,” and the instrumental values related to being “helpful” and “ambitious.” Values exist, however, in a hierarchy of three tiers, as shown in Table 10.

The collective perceived identity, which was presented in the qualitative results section, is defined by the first four themes that resulted from an interpretive analysis of interviews with organizational leaders. The perceived values revealed through the qualitative analysis reflect Rokeach’s (1973, 1979) value system. Table 12 shows how the values discussed in each of the four themes relate to Rokeach’s values. This table illustrates the relationship between the collective perceived and projected organizational identity, by showing how each of the perceived values are placed in the three tiers of communicated values.
Table 12
Comparison of Collective Perceived and Projected Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive theme</th>
<th>Rokeach’s values (1973, 1979)</th>
<th>Placement in tiers of communicated values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>1st tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>2nd tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>2nd tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>3rd tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family security</td>
<td>1st tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>True friendship</td>
<td>1st tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Capable</td>
<td>2nd tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>2nd tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social recognition</td>
<td>1st tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>1st tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>2nd tier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Terminal values are not italicized; instrumental values are italicized.

Theme #1, which explained the views leaders have of their organizations as expert providers of information, supported Rokeach’s (1973, 1979) values of “ambitious,” “intellectual,” “responsible,” and “wisdom.” In the content analysis, which reflected a collective projected identity, the value of being “ambitious” was communicated quite frequently, and is a first-tier value. The values of “intellectual” and “wisdom” appeared in the second tier of communicated values, so organizations communicated about these values to some degree, but these values were not expressed as frequently as first-tier values. “Responsible” appeared in the third tier of communicated values, and, therefore, did not receive much emphasis. Although leaders said they wanted to communicate a sense of responsibility as an organization, this responsibility was not reflected frequently in their organizational documents.
The value of “responsible” may be driven by business principles, such as the desire to secure funding, rather than by how leaders feel about people with disabilities. Therefore, because the collective identity of these organizations is a cause identity, it is not surprising that a more business-driven value would be underrepresented in communication tools. The value of being a responsible organization, however, is very important from a public relations perspective. As Heath and Coombs (2006) described, organization-public relationships are built upon values that foster a sense of reliability or dependability and a strong sense of commitment; organizations must be responsible to their publics to ensure that sustainable relationships are created and maintained.

Responsibility also is an important component of the issues management framework. For example, disability organizations have the opportunity to use persuasion to relate their causes to ongoing social or environmental issues. To be successful at persuasive communication, these organizations must communicate first and foremost that they are responsible to their publics (Perloff, 1993). Disability organizations also wrestle with legitimacy, another concept in the issues management framework, which relates to long-term issues that affect the disability cause rather than short-term organizational crises. Responsible organizations may be more likely to close legitimacy gaps – or misalignments with what an organization is doing and what its publics expect it to be doing – that may occur when significant issues arise (Heath, 1997; Heath and Coombs, 2006). Therefore, organizations should communicate their senses of responsibility in order to instill trust and motivate publics to action.

Theme #2 emphasized a variety of ways in which organizational leaders believe relationships to be important to their causes. There was a strong alignment between perceived and projected identity based on values about relationships. Theme #2 reflected Rokeach’s (1973, 1979) values of “family security” and “true friendship,” and showed that organizational leaders
prioritize relationship-building among publics, such as consumers and the community or the community and the organization. Leaders expressed a commitment to fostering cooperation. Furthermore, perceived and projected values are related to caring for loved ones and seeking companionship. Organizations communicate that people with disabilities are deserving of relationships in their lives. Therefore, organizations believe they are committed to facilitating both organizational growth and personal development through the relationship-building process. The literature indicates how important relationship-building is to successful issues management (Bridges & Nelson, 2000; Burkowitz & Turnmire, 1994) because relationships create a more-sustainable base for communication. These relationships keep publics invested with the organization throughout the ups and downs associated with change. According to Botan and Taylor (2004) organizations that focus on building relationships create a strong sense of shared meaning with their publics. When relationships are well maintained, publics trust organizations to responsibly balance organizational and public interests (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Grunig, 2001; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003).

Theme #3, which reflected the beliefs organizational leaders have about people with disabilities, supported Rokeach’s (1973) values of “capable,” “equality,” and “social recognition.” Organizational leaders said they viewed people with disabilities as being competent individuals deserving of equal opportunities and respect from others. Additionally, “social recognition” fell into the first tier of communicated values, and therefore was one of the organizations’ most-communicated values. “Equality” was communicated in organizational documents as well, but fell at the top of the second tier, and was not ranked as high as “social recognition.” “Capable” was a second-tier value as well, but less communicated than “equality.” These disability organizations did not communicate through their organizational documents about personal
competence, self-determination, and egalitarianism as frequently as they are communicating about values related to the importance of social recognition. Considering the common desire of disability activists to promote equality and acceptance of all people with disabilities (Bryan, 2002; Depoy & Gilson, 2004), it is surprising that “equality” and “capable” were not conveyed more frequently in communications materials. The values exemplified by Theme #3 are fundamental to the disability movement; organizational leaders felt their organizations have a significant role in promoting improvements in their communities that benefit the lives of persons with disabilities. This message was not actualized in communication efforts to the same extent that it was discussed by organizational leaders.

Theme #4, which stated how organizational leaders believe they should serve persons with disabilities, supported Rokeach’s (1973) values of “helpful,” “loving,” and “independent.” “Helpful” and “loving” fell into the first and second tiers of communicated values, thereby demonstrating some alignment in perceived and projected values. “Independent,” however, was not frequently communicated in organizational documents; it fell into the third tier of communicated values even though its significance was stressed by organizational leaders. This finding indicates a misalignment in perceived and projected values regarding independence and is surprising because the disability movement was initiated to support the role of persons with disabilities as independent members of society (Bryan, 2002).

In summary, all of the values that organizational leaders believe to be important to their organizations were expressed in the communication materials they produce, although some appeared more frequently than others. Specifically, the values of “responsible” and “independent” did not appear as often as other important values including “helpful” and “social recognition.” Organizational leaders and staff members should reexamine their communication materials to ensure that values significant to the disability cause are sufficiently projected. By
aligning its perceived and projected identity, an organization may improve its transparency and help publics understand the true essence of the organization. Heath and Coombs (2006) posited that relationships with publics are built upon connections that emphasize openness, trustworthiness, the ability to share a mission and goals, commitment, and compatibility on views and opinions—all characteristics that can be enhanced through transparency. According to Cheney and Christensen (2001), organizations that accurately communicate who they believe themselves to be maintain a greater sense of self. If an organization’s true self is emphasized in communication efforts, publics are more likely to connect with the organization because there is little room for interpretation or inconsistency. In other words, “what you see is what you get,” and publics respond well to this message.

Nonetheless, many of the perceived values that were observed in this research are aligned well with the projected values examined. The collective organizational identity these organizations possess is related to the individual- and issue-based beliefs about the value of individuals with disabilities to society and the importance of the disability movement. Overall, the values that were revealed support a new concept that may be important to further research: cause identity.

**New Concept: Cause Identity**

Cause identity, as defined in the results chapter, is a collection of emotional and personal values that center around a strong commitment to a movement or set of principles. Organizations share a strong commitment to a particular cause – in this case, disability – and build their identities around the beliefs they share in relation to this cause. The organizational identities explored in this research are built in response to collective issues that affect persons with disabilities, such as access to health care or social opportunities. Although issue-driven, the concept of cause identity is different from the concept of issue identity, which was explored by
Patricia A. Curtin and T. Kenn Gaither (2006) in their study of the World Health Organization’s smallpox education campaign. The campaign communicated several identities of smallpox – for example, smallpox was presented as a “scientific entity” and “public health emergency,” among others – and these identities were “area[s] of meaning that informed how the campaign unfolded” (p. 81). Curtin and Gaither applied the circuit of culture model (du Gay, Hall, James, Mackay, & Negus, 1997), which defined identity as “a central, discursive concept within public relations that problematizes not only the organizational identity of [the organization] and the publics involved in [the] campaign but even the identity of the issue itself” (Curtin & Gaither, 2006, p. 68). Issues – like organizations – take on identities of their own.

This dissertation proposes a macro look at identity as one that is constructed through communication efforts about a cause. A cause identity can be shared among similar organizations that are founded on similar principles. Disability, as a social construct, is more multifaceted than an issue alone, and therefore the term cause identity rather than issue identity is more fitting to describe the type of identity this group of disability organizations possesses. The cause identity shared by disability organizations relates to fundamental beliefs about persons with disabilities and the disability movement rather than specific issues such as changes in special education or Medicaid policies. For example, Matthew, from Organization B, said the values important to his organization were based on fundamental beliefs he held about the value of people with disabilities. Organization B was created to serve individuals specifically with autism spectrum disorders and not other disabilities. Nonetheless, although Organization B’s communication efforts often emphasize unique issues that affect people on the spectrum and their families, it was evident from the interview that the organization’s identity is based upon principles shared by all disability-related organizations. First, leaders strive to communicate how they individually think and feel about disability. Then they gain the support of other members of
the organization, which ensures that beliefs among members are aligned. Ultimately, organizational members unite to gain additional support from external publics for their cause.

As emphasized in the results section, the cause identity of these organizations outweighed other competing identities that relate to business practices such as fund raising or employee retention. Although cause identity may help solidify efforts that support the disability community, the specific nuances of these organizations as businesses are not conveyed in their communicated values, and are secondary to their commitments to the cause. This lack of attention to business values may affect how well organizations can sustain themselves in times of change. Organizations with a strong sense of cause identity depend on long-term public support of a conglomeration of issues that affect the disability community rather than short-term attention to smaller changes, such as less-significant social or political shifts. Short-term issues, however, still affect an organization, and, practically, communication about the organization as a smart business may increase the commitment publics feel toward an organization and create a sense of organizational stability. Organizations may struggle to adequately communicate with publics because business-focused values have not been established in patterns of communication.

The concept of cause identity may be further shaped and defined through in-depth study of organizational nuances other than values. In other words, it is unknown whether or not a cause identity is shaped only by values. For example, there is a possibility that the specific values revealed in this analysis may be universal for any social cause—from wildlife conservation to alleviating poverty.

Nonetheless, issues—such as the ones involved in this research—arise for organizations that operate from a similar cause identity. First, it is unknown whether or not cause identity is a conscious or unconscious decision on the part of organizations. A collective cause identity may
positively serve a group of organizations, but nonprofit organizations that operate within a competitive environment would more likely benefit by distinguishing themselves from their competitors. This research does not reveal whether organizations that serve similar populations – yet have distinct missions – wish to be grouped together in the eyes of their publics. Although cause identity may emphasize the passion these organizations have for issues affecting disability populations, it may not assist publics in identifying the specific differences among organizations.

Second, organizations must be able to assess their own communication practices in order to understand how they communicate their cause identities. Are organizations communicating about the unique or distinct aspects of their organizations within a cause identity? How do their publics interpret the communications? If organizations can ascertain the salience of their messages – that is, how publics interpret the messages (Entman, 1993) – it may be possible to refine communication practices so that distinct organizational identities are successfully communicated along with their feelings about a set of principles or a social movement.

The new concept of cause identity should be explored further so that the advantages and disadvantages can be clarified. Nonetheless, the results of this dissertation and the concept of cause identity have the potential to make contributions to a variety of scholarship areas including issues management, public relations and public communication, symbolic interactionism, values, and disability. These contributions are discussed in the following sections.

**Cause Identity and the Conceptual Framework for Issues Management**

This section applies the concept of cause identity to the conceptual framework for issues management proposed in the literature review. Issues management is viewed as the regulation of threats and opportunities that affect the overall function, image, and long-term reputation of an organization (Bridges, 2004). This dissertation proposes that issues management may be better understood when organizational identity is considered an important element in the issues
management framework. Cause identity may be of particular importance to organizations that deal with a multitude of long-term issues and a fluctuating social context, and current scholarship generally relates issues management only to crisis and risk communication situations (e.g., Heath, 1997; Renfro, 1993). When long-term issues arise, a focus on cause identity forces an organization to emphasize, in communication with its publics, its mission or core set of principles upon which the organization was founded. Practitioners and researchers should further explore how cause identity fits into the issues management framework.

For example, the first facet of issues management is that of the issues life cycle. As issues enter the significant or critical stages of the life cycle – when publics endorse an issue or are ready for its resolution (Lauzen, 1997) – organizations may increase communication regarding their cause identities and help keep publics focused on the basic values associated with the cause. This focus could help publics stay engaged with the issues that are associated with the cause rather than the issues that detract from fundamental organizational goals.

The second facet of issues management is environmental scanning, which is used to detect the opportunities and threats that affect an organization (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995). Environmental scanning could be used to further explore the issues that relate specifically to the cause the organization supports, such as long-term issues that affect the overall disability movement. A strong sense of cause identity will remind leaders of the fundamental reason that the organization exists as issues are identified. Further study into the kinds of issues that are long-term and have more effect on the cause could help organizations prioritize their environmental-scanning efforts.

The third facet of issues management, legitimacy, is important to cause identity for several reasons. An organization may use communication efforts to reinvigorate publics, reminding them of the legitimacy of the cause the organization stands for. Legitimacy can also
illuminate the position of a cause within current social norms or values (Meltzer, 2001). In addition, because causes are values-based, which may help publics identify with the organization, determining how cause identity is related to legitimacy may enhance the ability organizations have to position the cause within a social context.

The fourth facet of issues management is related to persuasive communication and advocacy, which may influence whether or not publics choose to respond or act on messages communicated by organizations (Perloff, 1993). As stated previously, persuasive messages may be constructed in relation to the cause the organization supports. This positioning of messages may motivate publics to act because publics – who have emotions invested in the cause – can identify strongly with a cause identity because it is based on individual- and issue-driven values.

Relationship management is the fifth facet of issues management, and cause identity may be a fundamental element in building organization-public relationships. The goal of building relationships is to create or sustain shared meaning between the organization and its publics (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Ledingham, 2003). Relating organizational communication to cause identity may benefit both the organization and its publics. For example, organizations will know that publics are invested because of a mutual commitment to common goals. Further, publics may trust an organization when it is clear that interests are mutual and actions on the part of the organization exist to benefit the fundamental cause of concern.

The sixth facet of issues management is organizational identity, which is defined in this dissertation as a construct that presents the organization’s “distinctive character” (Aust, 2004, p. 523) but adapts to a fluctuating environment (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). The concept of cause identity supports this definition; when identity is cause-oriented it encapsulates the underlying beliefs for which the organization was founded. A strong cause identity may carry the organization through periods of change by reminding organizational members and publics how
significant the cause is to them personally. Most organizational leaders consulted in this research expressed the belief that without a firm commitment to the cause, their organizations would not exist. This research does not, however, neglect the fact that organizations often have other competing or dual identities that will surface in response to issues. Competing or dual identities often result in organizational conflict. Similar to Albert and Whetten’s (1985) discussion of a university’s identities as a church and a business, it is likely that conflict could arise when certain business decisions must be made. It is possible that when organizations are focused more on their commitments to social causes than financial bottom lines, for example, that poor organizational decisions could result.

Although the specific nuances of cause identity have yet to be discovered, it is evident from this research that greater understanding of this macro-level concept may contribute to issues management scholarship. Therefore, because a cause identity is built upon a conglomeration of values in response to issues, the results of this research also support Illia, et al.’s (2004) statement that understanding organizational identity within an issues management framework is important. Understanding cause identity may inform how useful issues management is to sustaining a cause and long-term issues, rather than just short-term crises.

Public relations researchers, particularly those studying nonprofit organizations, may also find cause identity to be a viable concept. The next section addresses how important cause identity may be to public relations scholarship and nonprofit communication research.

**Cause Identity, Public Relations, and Nonprofit Communication**

Cause identity contributes to public relations and nonprofit communication research for several reasons. First, it is clear that a cause identity could encourage publics to connect with the organization on the basis of shared personal and emotional values. Therefore, the results of this
research support the notion that organizational identity may facilitate a positive and ongoing, two-way relationship with publics (Rowden, 2004).

Second, organizations that base their communication on a cause identity may find it easier to retain a sense of “self” even during change (Cheney & Christensen, 2001), because cause identity is based on the values that are upheld by most publics that engage with the organization. Therefore the concept of cause identity may have more to contribute to public relations research that explores how organizations and publics interact and maintain relationships based on shared understanding and commitment.

Third, issues are the driving force behind the public communication efforts of nonprofit organizations. Cause identity has a place in nonprofit research because nonprofit organizations are based on a commitment to shared ideas about a particular set of issues or movement (Andreasen & Kotler, 2002); nonprofit organizations exist because they share strong personal and emotional values related to a cause. A more in-depth look at cause identity may strengthen Heath’s (1997) statement that a clearly communicated organizational identity is particularly useful for nonprofit organizations. In Henderson’s (2005) research, for example, the economic and political identities central to New Zealand were based on fundamental ideas regarding personal feelings about genetic engineering.

Communication is understood through interaction. The next section details how symbolic interactionism is used in communicating a cause identity.

**Cause Identity and Symbolic Interactionism**

Cause identity is a nebulous concept that should be viewed through an interpretive lens. Symbolic interactionism may be an important theoretical foundation that supports how researchers and practitioners understand how cause identity is negotiated through patterns of communication. These patterns of communication are both internal and external.
First, a cause identity may be socially constructed primarily through internal organizational communication. The results of this research indicate how important it is for an organization’s members to have aligned values. Organizational leaders indicated that if the perceived identity of the organization is not constructed based on mutual internal understanding of the cause, it becomes more difficult for the organization to communicate its identity to others. Internal communication and interaction are used to increase commitment to the cause and ensure that a unified voice on values is presented. This supports Rudd’s (2000) notion that interpersonal interaction contributes to the understanding of organizational identity.

The social construction of cause identity is also negotiated through communication patterns between an organization and its external publics. Organizations that operate primarily from a cause identity communicate frequently about personal and emotional values; this communication is designed to help publics understand why they should also support the cause. For example, when an issue is raised that affects the cause the organization supports – such as funding for special education – the organization must find a way to communicate its stance on the issue as it relates to the disability cause. Patterns of communication between an organization and its external publics will shape the way in which the cause is understood and supported. Therefore, the results of this research support the idea that cause identity can be shaped through ongoing patterns of behavior (Charon, 2007).

These findings also contribute to research about values and how they affect the organizations’ collective identity. The next section details how cause identity may contribute to values research.

**Cause Identity and Values Research**

Cause identity is based on individual- and issue-driven values and therefore this research contributes significantly to scholarship that examines the role of values in shaping collective
perspectives. An organization’s leaders and its members are mutually invested in a cause identity and the values it is built upon; cause identity may influence on organizational decision making. Therefore, exploring how a cause identity creates an ideology that affects organizational decisions may show the significance of values and cause identity to organizational stability.

According to Rockeatch (1979):

Values operate as dynamic systems of social action because of their interconnectedness, their informational or directive effects and their capacities to serve as “carriers” of psychological energy. Values always have a cultural content, represent a psychological investment, and are shaped by the constraints and opportunities of a social system and biophysical environment. Changes in values are constrained and limited both by the external “reality constraints” of the aforementioned interpenetrating systems and by the “internal” dimensions of consistency, congruence, and appropriateness among values and beliefs themselves. When we can identify interconnected sets of values and beliefs which describe a preferred or “obligatory” state of a social system, we speak of an ideology (p. 21, italics in original)

In summary, cause identity prompts social action on the part of organizations and its publics. A cause identity is also a “carrier of psychological energy” (Rokeach, 1979, p. 21) that reminds an organization’s members and its publics of the organization’s fundamental beliefs, or why the organization exists.

Aspects of this research also may contribute to scholarship about disability communication. The next section identifies how cause identity contributes to disability research.

**Cause Identity and Disability Communication Research**

Cause identity has potential to shape the future of disability communication research because it is fundamental to understanding disability as a social construct. An effectively communicated cause identity may guide organizations as they shape advocacy efforts (Johnstone, 2001), thereby influencing how publics understand the role of disability in modern society. Ongoing and open communication about progressive disability themes that, for example, promote equality and social acceptance (Clogston, 1990, 1991, 1993; Haller 1995, 2000b) is important to organizations that wish to maximize how they communicate their contributions to
society. Research should examine how cause identity may influence the language used in communication efforts. Language that puts “people” before “disability” (Haller, Dorries, & Rahn, 2006), for example, is based on organizational commitment to furthering the disability movement.

This dissertation proposed the use of framing as a way of examining how messages are constructed to further the disability movement. Cause identity may be useful for organizations that wish to frame their messages in order to further public understanding of disability as a social construct. This research contributes to framing scholarship because it shows how organizations use their individual- and issue-driven values to shape messages and make decisions about public communication. Messages in organizational documents are based on leaders’ personal feelings about disability communities. Although framing was not a primary theoretical base for this particular study, framing should be considered in future research that addresses how individuals make sense of the messages communicated by disability organizations. The proper framing of a message can improve salience and is a necessity for effective public communication (Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). Hence, the following section discusses the practical implications of cause identity.

**Practical Implications**

There are several practical implications for nonprofit organizations and communication practitioners to consider in relation to cause identity. This research supports Craig Carroll’s (2006) proposition that publics pay more attention to the issues an organization stands for, rather than simply the organization itself. Therefore, disability organizations may be doing the right thing by defining the identities of their organizations based on the cause. A cause identity communicates an issues-based ideology to its publics, and if publics pay more attention to a collection of issues that affect a cause rather than the organization itself, how organizations use
cause identity may facilitate a long-term connection between the organization and its publics. This section discusses the pros and cons of a cause identity from a practical standpoint.

The first practical benefit of a cause identity is that it may help ensure that internal members share collective beliefs about their organization’s identity. Leaders recognized the importance of making sure that their own employees understood the values and identity of the organization that should be communicated. Personal values are shared, and shared ideas may strengthen individual commitments to the cause. As Barker and Camarata (1998) demonstrated, an agreed-upon identity creates a sense of collective reality which increases trust and commitment, and may strengthen the overall stability of the organization. Karen E. Mishra (2007) also demonstrated the emphasis organizational leaders place on engaging their employees in communication practices; leaders view employees as significant publics. According to Heath and Coombs (2006), “Employees want to work for good organizations that communicate well. In turn, employees become ambassadors by speaking well of the organization” (p. 30). Employees are often responsible for shaping the organization’s perceived identity, and communication is strengthened when perceived identity and projected identity are aligned (Illia, et al., 2004). Therefore, organizational leaders should work within their organizations to ensure that cause identity is adopted and clearly communicated by internal members of the organization.

The second practical implication of this concept is that cause identity may assist organizations in strengthening relationships with external publics. This research demonstrates that organizations want to share a mission and a commitment to goals with publics, which Heath and Coombs (2006) recognize as a crucial part of the relationship-building process. Rowden (2004) also posited that relationships are continuously negotiated through successful communication about organizational identity. Organizations should communicate a cause
identity to put a distinct “face” on the issues that are important to them (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). A cause identity is values-based and therefore may resonate significantly with publics that have a personal or emotional investment in the cause. This research supports David W. Guth and Charles Marsh’s (2006) definition of public relations as the “values-driven management of relationships between an organization and [its] publics” (p. 17).

There may be challenges, however, when organizations rely too heavily on a cause identity. This research clearly supports the point Bridges and Nelson (2000) made that an organizational identity is often so intertwined with the issues the organization represents that it makes it hard for the organization to have a distinctive voice. Other research criticizes the ability nonprofits have to distinguish themselves (Heath, 1997; Sargeant & Ford, 2007). Results from this study show that no real organizational identity differences exist among a group of organizations that vary distinctly in funding, size, and purpose. In fact, just by looking at the cause identity discovered in this research, this group of organizations could easily represent one large organization that serves all persons with disabilities. From a practical standpoint, it may help organizations in a competitive marketplace to find ways to communicate more about their distinct business-oriented values, which is not a focus of current communication efforts. If these organizations rely on a cause identity, they do not emphasize, for example, how they are committed to providing top-notch quality services, integrity, or their own fiscal responsibilities. Examining how a cause identity may function in a way that would support the organizations’ business goals may benefit overall organizational stability.

In summary, organizations need to find ways to capitalize on the benefits of a cause identity to building sustainable relationships while also communicating how the organization is a responsible business. The next section outlines future research that may further explain the results of this research and the concept of cause identity.
Future Research

The results of this dissertation indicate the need for future research in several areas, including values, organizational identity and public relations, cause identity, and disability. Specific suggestions for each area are outlined in this section.

For values research, future studies should examine the context in which communicated values are used. Because computer-assisted content analysis was used as a method, it was not possible to verify that these values are used only in conjunction with discussions about disability issues or the disability cause. It is inferred that the values expressed in communication were directly related to the cause, but values-based language could be further examined to determine whether, for example, a value such as “ambition” is related to business principles or beliefs about the disability cause. Qualitative content analysis may assist researchers in understanding how content is framed, which would uncover the latent meaning of values in organizational communication. In addition, the strength of the values expressed could not be ascertained through analysis with DICTION. The use of human coders could expand this research to identify values using a scale that would demonstrate the degree to which a value is expressed.

Additional values research should be designed to expand and test the values instrument used in this dissertation. Empirical testing will confirm that the instrument has mutually exclusive and exhaustive values categories. This kind of research would create a reliable and valid values instrument that could be used as a quantitative measure with a variety of organizations and their organizational documents.

Future research in organizational identity and public relations should examine the extent to which publics agree with the identity that organizations perceive and project. How publics perceive an organization is the third step in the communication process (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Van Leuven, 2004), and research that shows how identity is aligned or
misaligned on this level may contribute by demonstrating whether or not organizational identity facilitates mutual understanding between organizations and their publics. Surveys or focus groups with organizations’ publics – from internal employees, to donors, to consumers – may be used to ascertain the salience of messages used in organizational communication content.

The concept of cause identity should be further explored by scholars so that it can be better understood and measured. Qualitative methods that explore the experiences of leaders within organizations may help researchers detect additional insights into how a cause identity is developed, strengthened, sustained, and communicated by organizational leaders. The exploration of additional organizational narratives may help uncover the characteristics of cause identity as a phenomenon (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) that supports organizational communication and public relations practice. Exploration of how cause identity is constructed and understood by internal members of the organization could be ascertained through ethnographic research that focuses on the values embedded in discourse. Storytelling may be an important aspect of the development of cause identity; for example, the story of how a nonprofit organization is founded may play a significant role in shaping the concept of cause identity.

Cause identity should also be explored as it relates to causes other than disability, such as democracy (based on issues about voting, districting, turnout, representative reform, ethics, etc.) or healthy living (based on issues about eating and exercising, weight management, stress, longevity, etc.). Examining how cause identities are created and used would further explain how the phenomenon of cause identity influences the development of organizations and their communication patterns.

Finally, additional research with disability organizations should be employed to explore the other five facets of issues management—the life cycle, environmental scanning, legitimacy, advocacy and persuasion, and relationship building. Looking at other concepts related to issues
management may contribute to theory-building and show how issues management is particularly useful for long-term disability communication. Both quantitative and qualitative research may help scholars to place the concept of cause identity within the issues management framework. For example, researchers should ask if cause identity is an additional piece – or a seventh concept – of the issues management framework, or if it fits better as a facet of the sixth concept of organizational identity. Additionally, research should look at whether or not a cause identity drives the entire issues management framework specifically for other types of nonprofit organizations.

**Summary**

This dissertation was designed to explore the concept of organizational identity within an issues management framework by examining how organizational identity is expressed through perceived and projected values of local, disability-related nonprofit organizations. Results of a quantitative content analysis of communications materials and in-depth interviews with organizational leaders indicated the presence of strong collective identity based on individual- and issue-driven values. Organizations want to be perceived as helpful organizations that believe in the quality of life of persons with disabilities and the contributions persons with disabilities can make to the community. Organizations communicate that they are committed to helping persons with disabilities, fostering positive relationships among groups, and achieving social recognition for persons with disabilities. Values important to organizational leaders and communicated in organizational documents are individual- and issue-based, driven by a personal connection to the cause. The new concept of cause identity, which is an identity based on a shared values-based commitment to a particular movement or set of principles, was introduced as an important consideration for communication practice and research. Cause identity is
important because it may one day further explain the overall nature of nonprofit organizational
development and sustainability.
Appendix A: Organizational Recruitment Scripts

For phone recruitment:

Hello, my name is Julie Lellis, and I'm a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm conducting research designed to examine communication practices of local nonprofit organizations. I am particularly interested in how disability-related organizations communicate their values to others. I would like to review public documents that your organization uses to communicate its message, such as brochures, press releases, or Web pages. An interview with you or someone at your organization would also help us better understand your messages and methods of communication. This would require no more than one hour of your time. Would you be interested in speaking with me about these requests?

For email recruitment:

My name is Julie Lellis, and I'm a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am conducting some research at UNC that is designed to examine communication practices of local nonprofit organizations. I am particularly interested in how disability-related organizations communicate their values to others. I would like to review public documents that your organization uses to communicate its message, such as brochures, press releases, or Web pages. An interview with you or someone at your organization would help us better understand your messages and methods of communication. This would require no more than one hour of your time.

If you are willing to participate, please contact me at the e-mail address or phone number below so that we may further discuss a convenient place and time to meet as well as answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Julie Lellis, MS
Roy H. Park Ph.D. Fellow
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB #3365, 392 Carroll Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365
(919) 843-5792
julie_lellis@unc.edu
Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Approval

TO: Julie C Lellis
Journalism and Mass Communication
CB: 3365

FROM: Behavioral IRB

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF IRB

APPROVAL DATE: 3/27/2007

EXPIRATION DATE OF APPROVAL: 3/25/2008

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7. Surveys/interviews/focus groups, 6. Voice/image research recordings
Study #: 07-0422

Study Title: Voiced Values: Communicating a Local Organizational Identity for Disability

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator’s responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification form at ochr.unc.edu/forms). Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the adverse event form at the same web site.

Study Description:
Purpose: To examine whether a group of local disability-related nonprofit organizations share similar or different values, as these values may guide their abilities to communicate successfully about long-term issues within a fluctuating environment.

Participants: A total of 10-20 adult individuals who serve in leadership roles within ten selected organizations will participate in this research.

Procedures: Interviews with organizational leaders will be used to qualitatively describe the values that leaders view as being central to the organizations.
Details:
Call the IRB at 966-3113 if you have any questions. You can now access IRB status information at https://my.research.unc.edu/.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), and 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), where applicable.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill holds a Federal Wide Assurance approved by the Office for Human Research Protections, Department of Health and Human Services (FWA # 491).

Good luck with your interesting study!

Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
Office of Human Research Ethics
Co-Chair, Behavioral Institutional Review Board
CB# 7097, Medical School, Bldg 52
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097
aa-irb-chair@unc.edu
phone 919-962-7780; fax 919-843-5575

CC: Lisa Rynearson, Journalism and Mass Communication; CR 3365, 307 Carroll Hall, Faculty Advisor
Appendix C: Rokeach’s 36 Values

**Terminal Values**

Values concerned with an end-state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable Life</td>
<td>Concerned with comfort</td>
<td>comforts, prosperous, affluent, well-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting Life</td>
<td>Concerned with an exciting life</td>
<td>stimulating, active, exhilarating, thrilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Accomplishment</td>
<td>Concerned with accomplishment</td>
<td>accomplishment, contribution, achievement, attainment, culmination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World at Peace</td>
<td>Concerned with freedom</td>
<td>peace, peaceful, armistice, concord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World of Beauty</td>
<td>Concerned with beauty in nature and the arts</td>
<td>beauty, charming, splendid, elegant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Concerned with equality</td>
<td>equality, equity, impartiality, fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Security</td>
<td>Concerned with family security</td>
<td>family, home, household, stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Concerned with freedom</td>
<td>free, freedom, choice, liberty, opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Concerned with happiness</td>
<td>happy, content, jubilant, euphoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Harmony</td>
<td>Concerned with inner harmony</td>
<td>balanced, harmony, orderly, aplomb, composure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Love</td>
<td>Concerned with social and spiritual intimacy</td>
<td>intimacy, sexuality, spirituality, maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security</td>
<td>Concerned with safety</td>
<td>armed, defended, protected, shielded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>Concerned with an enjoyable, leisure life</td>
<td>enjoyment, leisure, satisfying, enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Concerned with salvation redeemed</td>
<td>salvation, immortality, heaven, delivered,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Respect</td>
<td>Concerned with self-esteem</td>
<td>self-esteem, self-assurance, worthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Recognition</td>
<td>Concerned with respect from others</td>
<td>recognized, admired, accepted, appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Friendship</td>
<td>Concerned with close companionship</td>
<td>companionship, fellowship, comradeship, united</td>
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<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Concerned with mature understanding</td>
<td>wisdom, discernment, sense, insight, perceptive</td>
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### Instrumental Values

Values concerned with daily behaviors

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Appendix D: Document Checklist for Content Analysis

For each organization, copies of the following public relations documents published within the last year (April 2006-April 2007)* and used for external communication purposes will be obtained:

☐ Annual reports
☐ Belief/mission statements (if not published elsewhere)
☐ Brochures
☐ Direct mail pieces
☐ E-mail alerts
☐ Fact sheets
☐ Media advisories
☐ Media kits
☐ Newsletters or magazines
☐ News releases (print or broadcast scripts)
☐ Opinion editorials
☐ Public service announcements
☐ Speech text (delivered externally)
☐ Web copy

*If no published documents are available for the year for one of the above categories, backdated documents may be submitted if the documents are currently being used by the organization for external communication purposes.

**Web copy selected for inclusion is limited to pages that describe the purpose/history of the organization or services provided. External links to other sites within the organization Web site will not be pursued.
Appendix E: Customized Values Instrument

Terminal Values

T1: Comfortable Life

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**T4: World at Peace**

| amity                   | concord      |  |  |  |
| armistice               | nonviolence  |  |  |  |
| calm*                   | nonviolent   |  |  |  |
| calmly*                 | peace        |  |  |  |
| calmness*               | peaceably    |  |  |  |
|                         | peaceful     |  |  |  |
|                         | peacefulness |  |  |  |
|                         | tranquil     |  |  |  |
|                         | tranquility  |  |  |  |
|                         | quiet**      |  |  |  |
|                         | quieting*    |  |  |  |

**T5: World of Beauty**

| art                     | charm       |  |  |  |
| artistic                | charming    |  |  |  |
| arts                    | charms      |  |  |  |
| attractive              | comeliness  |  |  |  |
| attractiveness          | elegance    |  |  |  |
| beautiful               | elegant     |  |  |  |
| beauty                  | excellent   |  |  |  |
| best                    | fresh*      |  |  |  |
|                         | gorgeous    |  |  |  |
|                         | graceful*   |  |  |  |
|                         | gracefully**|  |  |  |
|                         | incredible* |  |  |  |
|                         | magnificence|  |  |  |
|                         | magnificent |  |  |  |
|                         | natural     |  |  |  |
|                         | nature      |  |  |  |
|                         | precious*   |  |  |  |
|                         | quaint      |  |  |  |
|                         | remarkable  |  |  |  |
|                         | splendid    |  |  |  |
|                         | splendor    |  |  |  |
|                         | wonderful   |  |  |  |
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### T11: Mature Love

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### T12: National Security

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## T14: Salvation

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## T15: Self-Respect

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T16: Social Recognition

accept
accepted
accepting*
acknowledge
acknowledged
acknowledges
acknowledging
admiration
admire
admired
admires
appreciate
appreciated
appreciates
appreciation
appreciative
consumer-driven*
leader*
recognizable
distinguish
distinguished
distinguishes
exclusive* distinguishes
executive
executes
executives
fine
finer
finest
identity*
importance
important
individual*
individualized*
leaders*
leadership*
leading*
led*
memorable*
o official
people-first*
person-centered*
person-first*
professional*
professionals*
qualification
qualifications
qualifies
quality*

T17: True Friendship

affiliate*
affiliated**
affiliates*
greed
alongside*
associates
associating
association
brotherhood
brethren
brotherly
camaraderie
citizens*
close
closeness
coalition*
coalitions*
collective*
collaboration*
collaborations*
collaborative*
committed*
commitment*
communities**
community*
community-based*
cooperation*
cooperative*
common
commonality
companionship
company
comradeship
congregate
congregates
congregation
congregations
congregating
connect*
connects*
connection*
connections*
fellow
fellowship
fellowships
fraternal
fraternity
friend*
friendly*
friends
friendship
friendships*
group*
groups*
involved*
join*
joined**
links*
membership*
merge**
mixed*
mixed*
mutual**
mutually*

network*
participate*
participated**
participating*
participation*
partner*
partnered*
partnering**
partnership*
partnerships*
relate
relationship
relationships
team*
teambuilding*
teams**
together
unite
united
unites
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## Instrumental Values

### I1: Ambitious

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<td>Try*</td>
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<td>Future*</td>
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### I2: Broadminded

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<td>Tolerant</td>
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### I3: Capable

| abilities* | capacity* | productive skills |
| ability*   | competence | proficient strengths* |
| able       | competencies* | qualified strengths* |
| adequate*  | competent | qualifies suited |
| adequately* | effective | qualify well-suited |
| apt        | effectively | skill |
| capable    | fitted | skilled |

### I4: Cheerful

| animated | humorous** | optimistic** |
| bright   | jolly      | pleasant    |
| buoyant  | jovial     | positive*   |
| cheer    | joy*       | refreshing  |
| cheerful | joyous     | smile*      |
| cheery   | light-hearted | smiles** |
| fun      | lively     | sunny       |
| glad     | merriment  | upbeat*     |
| gladness | merry      |             |
| gleeful  | mirth      |             |
| humor*   | optimism*  |             |

### I5: Clean

| clean     | immaculate | refines | undefiled |
| cleanliness | neat      | scrub   | uninfected |
| cleans    | pure      | scrubbed | unpolluted |
| cleansed  | purge     | scrubbing | unsoiled |
| clear     | purges    | scrubs  | unstained |
| cleared   | purified  | stainless | wash |
| distill   | purify    | tidy    | washed |
| distilled | refine    | unadulterated | washes |
| distills  | refined   | unadulterated | washing |
### I6: Courageous

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### I7: Forgiving

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### I8: Helpful

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<td>helps</td>
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<td>improving*</td>
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<td>elevate*</td>
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<td>services*</td>
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### I9: Honest

<table>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>true</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### I10: Imaginative

- **brainstorm**
  - daring
  - imaginations
  - invent
  - imaginative
  - inventive
- **brainstorming**
  - discover*
  - imaginative
- **clever**
  - discovered
  - imagine
  - origin
- **cleverly**
  - discovering
  - imagined
  - originally
- **create**
  - discovers
  - imagines
  - originate
- **created**
  - discovery
  - ingenious
  - originates
- **creating**
  - dream**
  - innovation**
  - vision
- **creation**
  - dreaming*
  - innovative*
- **creative**
  - explore*
  - inspiration*
  - visionary
- **creativity**
  - explores**
  - inspire
  - visions
- **creator**
  - exploring**
  - inspired
  - wish*
- **dare**
  - hope*
  - inspires
  - wishes**
- **dares**
  - imagination
  - inspiring

### I11: Independent

- **alone**
  - empowerment*
  - self-direction*
  - self-supporting
- **autonomous**
  - independence
  - self-directs
  - self-supportive
- **autonomy**
  - independent
  - self-directed
  - separate
- **efficacy**
  - independently*
  - self-governed
  - separation
- **empower**
  - own*
  - self-governing
- **empowered**
  - self-direct
  - self-sufficient
- **empowering**
  - self-directed

### I12: Intellectual

- **brilliance**
  - educated
  - intellectual
  - mindful
- **brilliant**
  - educates
  - intellectualized
  - reflect
- **brilliantly**
  - education*
  - intellectuals
  - reflective
- **communicate**
  - educational
  - intelligence
  - reflects
- **communicates**
  - inform
  - interact*
  - smart
- **communicating**
  - information*
  - interacts**
  - strategically*
- **communication**
  - informed
  - interaction*
  - strategically**
- **conversation**
  - informing*
  - interactions**
- **conversations**
  - informs**
  - knowledge
- **educate**
  - intellect
  - knowledgeable
I13: Logical

accuracy**
accurate*
appropriate*
appropriately**
best-practices*
clarity*
clear**
clearly**
coherence
coherent
coherently
comprehensive*
consistency
consistent
consistently*
coordinate
coordinated*
coordination*
coordinators
constructive**
constructively*
decision-making*
definite**
definitely**
define**
defining*
defined**
deliberate
deliberates
deliberation
demonstrate**
demonstrates**
demonstrated*
demonstrating*
examine
examining
formulate
formulated
formulates
formulating
logic
logical
path*
plan
planned
planning
plans
predict**
predicts**
predictable*
prove**
proven*
proves**
rational
rationality
rationalize
rationalized
rationalizing
realistic*
reason
reasoned
reasoning
solution**
solutions*
sound*
sound-mind
sound-minded
sound-mindedly
structure
structured
structures
valid

I14: Loving

affection
affectionate
affections
ardor
beloved
care
cares
caregiver**
caregivers*
caregiving*
caring
charity
concern
dear
devoted
devotion
embrace*
embraced*
embraces**
embracing**
empathetic*
empathy**
fond
fondness
gentle**
gently*
genuine**
genuinely*
kind
kindness
love
loved
loves
loving
nurtur**
nurtured**
nurture*
nurtures**
nurturing*
receptive
receptivity
sympathy**
sympathetic*
tender
tenderly
thoughtfulness
touch*
touched*
touches**
touching*
welcome
welcomed
welcomes
welcoming
### I15: Obedient

<table>
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<td>command</td>
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<td>management*</td>
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<td>sin</td>
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<td>governing</td>
<td>obey</td>
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### I16: Polite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>considerate</td>
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<td>formal*</td>
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<td>considers</td>
<td>formally**</td>
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<td>grateful*</td>
<td>invites*</td>
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### I17: Responsible

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<tr>
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</table>
### I18: Self-control

| controlled | focuses* | self-control | self-mastery |
| disciplined | moderate | self-denying | self-regulated |
| discipline  | perseverant | self- | temperance |
| discretion  | restrained | determination* | |
| focus*      | restrain   | self-determined** | self-disciplined |
| focused*    | restraining | | |

*Terms added through pilot procedure
**Tense variations added
Appendix F: Interview Guide

1. Describe your organization and its structure.
   a. Probe: Are you affiliated at all with other organizations? If so, how?

2. In your own words, describe the mission or purpose of your organization.

3. Why were you attracted to work for [your organization]?

4. Tell me about your role in your organization.
   a. Probe: What does your job entail?

5. Why is [insert disability] an important issue for others to understand?

6. When you think of the identity of your organization, what does this mean to you?
   a. Probe: What do you think your organization stands for?
   b. Probe: How is that distinct, if at all, from other organizations?
   c. Probe: How have you struggled, if at all, with thinking about your organization’s identity?
   d. Probe: How has your identity changed over time?
   e. Probe: How consistent are the views on your identity within the organization?

7. What message/messages do you hope to communicate to others?
   a. Probe: What do you hope others get out of reading/hearing about your organization?
   b. Probe: Describe the kinds of groups or individuals you hope listen your messages.
   c. Probe: What specific communication pieces best represent your organization?
   d. Probe: Who or what influences your message/strategy?
   e. Probe: Does anyone assist you in the development of your message/strategy?

8. What values are important to your organization?
   a. Probe: How do you define values?
   b. Probe: What values are most important? or, Are there values that are more important than others?
   c. Probe: How do your communications materials reflect your values?

9. Is there anything else I should know about your organization’s values or identity?
Appendix G: Interview Participant Consent Form

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #07-0422
Consent Form Version Date: 3/25/2007

Title of Study: Voiced Values: Communicating a Local Organizational Identity for Disability

Principal Investigator: Julie C. Lellis
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Journalism and Mass Communication
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: (919) 843-5792
Email Address: julie_lellis@unc.edu
Faculty Advisor: Lois A. Boynton, Ph.D.

Study Contact telephone number: (919) 606-3794
Study Contact email: julie_lellis@unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to review the role of values in nonprofit organizations’ communication about disability and/or chronic illness. We hope that this study may provide useful information regarding communication campaigns disseminated from your organization. You are being asked to be in this study because you help make decisions regarding organizational communication at your organization.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 10 to 20 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
Your participation will require about an hour of your time. You may be contacted after your participation if additional questions arise.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
You will be asked to participate in an interview individually with the researcher. An audio recorder will record the interview session, which should take up to one hour of your time. You may ask at any time during the interview that the recorder be turned off. If you do not wish to be recorded, you may still participate in this study. You will be asked questions regarding the goals of communications campaigns at your organization, and you will be asked questions about your organization’s values and identity. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer, for any reason.
What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
We do not anticipate any risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study.

How will your privacy be protected?
Computer audio files will be transcribed for analysis. All computer data files will be password protected and paper copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. Computer and paper copies of data will be destroyed two years after the analysis is complete.

Individual participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study; pseudonyms will be used. Positions/titles may be used to describe study participants, but organization names will not be revealed in any data reports or publications. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

--------------------------------- --------------------------------- 
Participant’s Agreement:
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________   _________________
Signature of Research Participant     Date

_________________________________________
Printed Name of Research Participant

_________________________________________  _________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

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Appendix H: Sample Analytic Memo

Elizabeth, Organization I:

-Why do you feel that mental illness is an important issue to communicate about?
-Discussing discrimination against people with mental illness
-Describes discrimination as “unconscionable”
-Began to cry during the discussion

-Elizabeth’s relationship to the values her organization stands for were deeply personal
-Sees the organization as so committed to the cause of making the world a better place for people with mental illness
-Her personal investment is to get others to ascribe to the same values she has
-Apologized, “I’m sorry, I get upset when I talk about our mission.”
-Reiterated, “It’s really important stuff that we’re doing”

-Why are values so personal?
-How do organizations exist based on personal values?
References


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Smudde, P. Issue or crisis: A rose by any other name…. *Public Relations Quarterly, 46*(4), 34-36.


