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Transparency and City Government Communications

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ABSTRACT

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This study expresses the need for a communications model created specifically for government communications that is centered on the concept of transparency. However, it also recognizes the previous research done pertaining to government communications and public relations. Importantly, the study recognizes the lack of trust in American government at city, state and federal levels and the need to improve trust, which is very closely related to transparency.   The study focuses primarily on a model created in 2007 called the three-dimensional model for government communications. The model has four parts: the base of the model is the need to value transparency; the other three parts are communication practices, provision of resources, and organizational support. This study seeks to test and quantify the three-dimensional model through the creation of a survey based on the four parts of the three-dimensional model. The study seeks to determine if by following the guidelines established in the three-dimensional model a city will be more transparent.   The findings come from the point of view of city communicators. Over two hundred city communicators from the largest cities in America participated in the study. The findings show that following the tenets of the three-dimensional model does in fact lead to greater transparency. Although the study only surveyed government communicators at the city level, the findings are important to government communicators at all levels of government. The study illustrates the importance of creating a communications plan that is based on transparency and the three-dimensional model. It also illustrates that the frustrations found at the federal level are similar to those faced at the city level. The study also sheds light on the need for future research pertaining to government communications.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

James Madison once said, "A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives" (as quoted in Florini, 2004, p.19). James Madison's statement focuses on the importance of information and access to information within a democracy in order to be a functioning and effective democracy. Even in the earliest years of the United States, the founding fathers of this nation saw a need for a people who were informed and aware of the doings of the government. The first leaders of this nation created the nation on the pretense of transparency and openness. They even alluded to transparency and openness in the United States Constitution. "Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same" (Article I, Section 5). And again, "No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time" (Article I, Section 9).

A democratic government is defined as "a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation" (Miriam-Webster 2008). In order for the people to have supreme power, they must have knowledge. In order for people to have knowledge, the government must make their decisions and actions transparent. If a democratic government is to be more transparent, government communicators themselves must realize and accept the importance and value of openness to the public. The public must also trust the government; trust is a vital aspect to any functioning democracy. In democracies, citizen trust in government is necessary for political

leaders to make binding decisions and to commit resources to attain societal goals (Gamson, 1968). However, Americans are losing trust in the government. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, 75% of the American public believed that you could always or almost always trust the lawmakers and agencies in Washington to do what is right. According to the 10th edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer, this past year has been unlike any other. In 2009, only 30% of Americans trust the American Government to do what is right according to the 2009 Edleman Trust Barometer, down from 39% in 2008. Also, according to the 2009 Edleman report, in no country is trust in a more dismal state than in the United States, where government, business, and media are all distrusted by the public to do what is right. Just this year, Americans watched as a corrupt Illinois governor was led away in handcuffs in front of TV cameras, and watched as a U.S. Senator had to decline a position in the new Obama Administration due to failure to pay taxes. This year, Americans have more reasons than ever before to stop trusting government and corporate America.

While trust is not the major issue of this study, it must be recognized that trust and transparency are inexplicably related. Rawlins (2008) measured the relationship between transparency and trust and found that the two were strongly connected. Transparency plays a major role in an organization's ability to obtain and maintain public trust and a profession who wants to be trusted by its publics needs to be transparent (Bunting, 2004). One federal government communicator stated, "Transparency in government communications also addresses issues of trust. Government communicators have observed that the more people trust us, the more credibility we have and the better job we can do" (Fairbanks, Plowman, & Rawlins, 2007, p. 31).

In recent years, transparency has become a widely discussed and pressing issue. The American people are demanding truth and information from the government at both the federal and the local level. Both 2008 presidential candidates, Barrack Obama and John McCain listed transparency as an important issue facing America on their presidential websites. Obama (2008) stated, "I will increase transparency so that ordinary Americans can understand their government and trust that their money is well spent. Secrecy dominates government actions and we need to bring Americans back into their government" (p.5). While McCain's (2008) website read, "I have fought the good fight against the practices that alienate the public from their elected leaders. I have fought for public disclosure and greater transparency" (Ethics Reform, Para. 5). Transparency has become a pressing and important issue as a result of the many government scandals and failures in the recent years such as the refusals of the Bush administration to offer Congress the names of private sector advisers on energy policy and the stalling of Reagan-era documents under the Presidential Records Act (Blanton, 2002). Not only has there been a spike in corporate and federal government scandals, it is happening at the state and local level as well.

Trust in all three spheres of government—federal, state, and local—dropped between 2004 and 2006, possibly reflective of the poor response of all governments to Hurricane Katrina (Kincaid & Cole, 2006). While transparency at all levels of government is important, this study will seek to better understand the role of transparency in city governments.

Communications scholars have attempted to understand relationship building, information sharing, public relations strategies, and public sector communications throughout the years. However, Grunig and Hunt (1994) presented some of the most well-known and well-respected theories to date pertaining to public relations. Their four models are: Press agentry/publicity model, the public information model, the two-way symmetrical, and the two-

way asymmetrical models. The public information model best fits within the public sector. However these and other existing public relations and communication models do not adequately account for the unique environmental characteristics of the public sector (Liu & Horsley, 2007). While private sector models are helpful in understanding some of the basic tenets of public sector communications, they are not complete. Public sector communications are fundamentally different from private sector. There is currently very little research pertaining to a government communications model that focuses on transparency and helping to restore public trust. As stated by Garnett (2003), "literature on communication performance— specifically, communication performance in the public sector — is scant" (p.37).

More research must be done on the topic of transparency in government and public communications, especially pertaining to the local and municipal level, which is at the very core of politics. While it is understood that transparency in government decision making includes the tenets of the models of public relations created by Grunig and Hunt (Fairbanks, Rawlins, & Plowman, 2007), it must be realized, that the literature and research is lacking in this area. There are a number of communications theories and public relations theories to date that pertain to how companies and organizations can and should work with their publics; however, it has been argued that private sector theories may not work as well in the public sector (Boyne, 2002). Therefore, research must be done to better understand the public sector. One such model for government communications was created by Heise (1985). The model consisted of five vital elements: openness, using more than one medium to disseminate information to the public, seeking feedback from a government agency's publics, making managers accountable for the atmosphere of communications within an agency, and not mixing politics with communications. The tenets of the model still very much hold true today, but more needs to be known, especially

about transparency, and there needs to be a greater focus on transparency. The model needs to be based upon the tenets of transparency. Another more recent model, the three-dimensional model for transparency in government communications (Fairbanks et al., 2007), which is based on valuing transparency, will be the central focus of this study. This model is a three-dimensional model and therefore consists of four parts. The model is based upon the first part, which is valuing transparency. The three other parts that build upon the base are: organizational support, communication practices, and provision of resources. The model, when adhered to by public communicators will help to create more transparent public agencies. The literature review will cover this theory as well as the aforementioned communications and public relations theories in more depth.

     An informed public is critical to a healthy democracy and it is therefore important to understand and know what government communicators and agencies are doing to inform the public. Transparency is critical to creating an informed public (Fairbanks et al., 2007). The question as to whether or not transparency is valued and practiced in communications practices among city and local government communicators across the country is what this study seeks to determine. An important part of transparent communications is whether or not the communicator has the tools necessary to practice it and whether or not they value transparency and openness. While a leader or manager sets the tone for how transparent the organization will be, a communicator must recognize that his or her role is to express the need to value transparency to the manager or leader and to communicate it to the staff (Fairbanks et al., 2007).

Scope of the Study

This study seeks to take the three-dimensional model for transparency in government communications and apply it at the city government level. The model was created to, "guide communicators, agency administrators and scholars in understanding how to make the workings of government more transparent" (Fairbanks, et al, 2007). The study seeks to survey city communicators with a set of questions that are created based on the four parts of the three-dimensional model and also from a test for transparency created by Rawlins (2008). The questions based on the three-dimensional model will help determine if, according to the model, the focus of the city communicator and adhering to the ideals of the three-dimensional model is what leads to transparency. The questions that test for transparency will help to determine if adhering to the aforementioned principles from the three-dimensional model make a city more transparent.   The three-dimensional model for transparency in government communication was created in a study that questioned federal government communicators and it did not determine whether these same tenets were applicable at the local level, or within city governments. This study sets out to determine if what the federal government communicators determined was important in creating a transparent government will be applicable at the city government level. This study also recognizes the close relationship between trust and transparency; however it seeks to study transparency and its importance, not trust. The study will survey 601 city communicators from the cities in America with a population of 50,000 or more according to the 2000 US Census Report.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is both academic and professional. The study seeks to provide researchers and local government leaders and communicators with a better understanding of the role of transparency in local governments. It also seeks to better understand how city communicators feel about their role within the organization of city governments. This study will largely seek to understand the state of transparency in America's most populous cities.

This study also seeks to create a test to measure the three-dimensional model for transparency in government communications (Fairbanks et al., 2007). The model was created qualitatively using in-depth interviews and if it is reliable, it will be able to apply to all levels of government. This study will test the model quantitatively and at the city level of government.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States government has always communicated with the public in some way or another and within each agency, branch, or individual state or local government is some form of a communications plan. The federal government, along with state and local governments across the country, serves and communicates with every citizen in the United States. However these relationships and the modes of communication, though important, are not always well understood. Academic research is lacking in the area of public sector and government communication. Public relations theories abound, however many have been mostly tested in the private sector. This literature review looks at some of the current public relations theories and some of the research and a few theories pertaining to and related specifically to public sector communications. It also explores trust and its relation to transparency and the news media and its relation to transparency. The review of literature also helps to understand the importance of transparency at the local level of government communications versus the federal or national level.

Public Agencies v. Private Organizations

There is a common phrase in American government and business conversations: government should be run like a business. The idea has been around for decades and is a topic of great debate and research. Wood (1991) explained that the idea of government becoming more businesslike started post-World War II with the development of public choice, and the early work of Arrow (1963) and Niskanen (1971). These new ideas helped to generate a set of administrative reform doctrines built on ideas such as transparency. These new ideas were also in stark contrast to the status quo of traditional military-bureaucratic ideas of government administration, with their emphasis on orderly hierarchies and elimination of duplication or

overlap. The idea of government being run like a business has also been met with resistance, and the literature explains why.

Beckett (2000) explained some of the major differences between government and private corporations and why they must be treated differently. Business comes with expectations, is openly self-interested and remains self-supporting. In great contrast to government, business is expected to keep secrets. The idea that government should run like a business sets business as the exemplar for government to follow; however, the same expectations cannot be held for government. Government can take opportunities to learn from business practices and procedures, but it must be done with caution and care. In comparing government and business procedures and policies, there must be great distinction.

Garnett (2000) also explained some of the major differences between the government agencies or public organizations and private firms or corporations. Government agencies have more red tape and rules than do private organizations. Also, public organizations have more goal complexity and ambiguity, and public administration officials work under greater personnel and purchasing constraints and rules.

One of the most important and greatest differences between the public and private sector was explained by Viteritti (1997) who expressed that purposeful and concise communication between government and the people is not simply an obligatory practicality. It is a moral obligation that originates from the very basis of a democracy and the relationship between the government and its citizens.

Another considerable difference between private corporations and the government is that federal agencies and state and local governments must comply with laws which require that they

make certain information public like the Freedom of Information Act and other state and local

laws (Liu & Horsley, 2007).

Current Public Relations Models

The following section discusses some of the major current public relations models. Three

of the models were created specifically for government communications (Heise's Public

communications model, the government communication decision wheel, and the three-

dimensional model in government communications) and the remaining models were created for

the private sector (Grunig and Hunt's four models of communications and public relations, and

the public relations process model).

The government communication decision wheel

The government communication decision wheel model (Liu & Horsley, 2007) embodies

the importance of the unique environmental characteristics of the public sector by determining

four coexisting, complementary microenvironments: multilevel, intragovernmental,

intergovernmental, and external. The multi-level microenvironment is where two or more levels

of government come together on a single issue while each level of government maintains some

unique and separate responsibilities. The intergovernmental environment is where two or more

units at the same governmental level coordinate. An intragovernmental environment is where a

single agency from any level of government takes action. And lastly, an external

microenvironment is where any level of government coordinates with private or nonprofit

organizations. The model also highlights eight environmental characteristics that affect

government communication and the model explains how these eight characteristics operate in

each of the four microenvironments. The model provides a useful tool to government

communicators to help them select the most effective means of communication for each unique and individual situation and environment.

Public communication model

In 1985, J. Arthur Heise saw the need for public confidence in American government to be rebuilt. Heise proposed an alternative communication model and expressed that all levels of government must communicate more effectively with the many publics they serve. The model Heise proposed consisted of five tenets. First, government officials needed to make publicly available all releasable information, whether it shed a positive or negative light on the organization. This dissemination needs to be timely and completely accurate. Second, government officials would need to continue to communicate with their publics through the mass media and also find alternative and new ways of disseminating information to reach difficult to reach publics. Third, rather than continue to rely on a small group of politically active organizations and individuals for partial and biased feedback, government communicators need to create new ways of reaching the entire community they serve to gain new perspectives and more accurate feedback. Fourth, senior public officials can legitimately employ public resources and communication channels in policy-making processes without becoming involved in electoral politics. Fifth, the implementation of the public communication approach needs to be the responsibility of top management who needs to hold each manager responsible for the implementation of the agency's communications policy. Part of this aspect of the model also assumes that over time, public relations and communication will become as important in the public sector as it has become in the private sector. The model stresses the importance of the communication department and compares it to the importance of the fiscal department in any government or private corporation. While Heise's model clearly addresses the need for a

communication model that was created specifically for the public sector, it doesn't focus enough on transparency, which is crucial for the government to have the trust of the people.

Three-dimensional model for transparency in government communications

Fairbanks, Plowman, & Rawlins (2007) created a model called the three-dimensional model in government communications. This model is the basis for this study. The three-dimensional model is different from other communications models in that its purpose is to give government communicators a basis upon which to create an objective communications or public relations plan. It is also different in that it has built upon the ideas of the Heise's (1985) model and the two-way communication model created by Grunig and Grunig (1992). It was created specifically for government communicators, but can be applied in other public relations settings as well.

The model is three dimensional and therefore consists of four parts, communication practices, organizational support, provision of resources, and the final part of the model is the base of the model which is the need to value transparency. This aspect is the foundation and the base of the model and it infers that when communicators truly value transparency and commit themselves to transparent communication practices the other elements of the model impact the degree to which transparency can be attained. Ultimately, without this first part the other aspects cannot be realized. According to the model, to value transparency means to seek to communicate in transparent ways and to adopt practices that promote open information sharing. Provision of resources explains the need for the appropriate amount of time, staffers, and money to be appropriated to the cause of transparency. Without the needed resources, transparency cannot be attained. Transparency takes effort, time, and money. Communicating in more transparent ways takes more time than not. The third part of the model, communication practices, explains the

need for practices that allow for open information sharing. The researchers expressed the importance of the two-way symmetrical model of communication. The model illustrates that communicators must work with government managers to create an organizational culture that supports transparency. This part of the model (communication practices) also expressed the need for communicators to have a seat at the management table within any management structure. The final element of the model, organizational support demands that there be a structure in place within the organization that allows a communicator to access and share information (Fairbanks et al., 2007).

This model is one of the first that admonishes government communicators to create communications plans that are based on transparent ideals and principles in communicating with their publics. This model focuses on the specifically assigned communicator to spread transparency and transparent ideals throughout their agency. However, the study focused solely on federal government communicators, to better realize if this model can be a successful model for all government communicators; it must also be applied to communications practices within local governments. This is the reason that this study chose to survey local government communicators.

Four models of Communication and Public Relations

Grunig and Hunt (1984) presented four models of communication or public relations: the press agentry/publicity model, the public information model, the two-way symmetrical, and the two-way asymmetrical models. The press agentry model is a one-way asymmetrical approach that is propagandistic and seeks publicity and media attention in almost any way possible. The public information model uses one-way communication to disseminate and distribute accurate but very rarely negative information about an organization. The public information model is the

model most often used by government communicators. And while the public information model is focused on informing the public, it rarely disseminates negative information, meaning transparency isn't always valued. Heise (1985) saw that government PR programs seemed to use this approach when he explained that the government's emphasis, especially at the local level is focused on information dissemination and very little effort is spent on measuring effectiveness or gathering and facilitating feedback. Heise also explained that the government needs to disseminate the information themselves rather than rely on the media to share all pertinent information. Both Heise's model and the press-agentry model fail to put any emphasis on valuing transparency.   The two-way symmetrical model is two way communication and public relations that uses dialogue, bargaining, and negotiation to resolve conflicts with its publics and learn its needs and desires to create the good relationships. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) later added to the two-way symmetrical model and explained that this communication model is characteristic of excellent organizations. It uses interactive communication, which revolves around truthful exchanges of information between the organization and its publics. This model focuses on responsibility and understanding rather than persuasion. The two-way asymmetrical model uses research to know its publics and which messages would best resonate with them and create the most desirous outcome for the organization (Grunig, 1990). Of these models, the two-way symmetrical model is the most conducive to transparency. However, research shows that in practice, two-way symmetrical communication is happening much less often than what is preferable. Two-way asymmetrical communication, where dialogue takes place solely for the organization's benefit, and one-way communication, where an organization works solely to disseminate information to audiences without regard for feedback or response, is more common. One-way communication is especially popular among government agencies (Martinelli, 2006).

Government agencies could benefit from using the two-symmetrical model, but they need something else to guide them. Government agencies need an additional model that guides them in how to be more transparent and how to use the excellence model. Grunig's models while important to the field of communications, and even that of public or government communications fail to address the concept that the public sector's publics do not trust them. This specific predicament calls for a specifically created model that helps build that trust. The missing element is transparency or openness.

Public Relations Process Model

Hazelton and Long (1988) created a model they named the public relations process model. This model was different from previous models in that it looked to understand public relations from an open systems theory approach.

The model takes three parts of a relationship: organization, communication, and target audience. The model takes these three subsystems and explains that there are five interacting aspects of communications: legal/political, social, economic, technological, and competitive. Within the organization subsystem, environmental inputs interact with the organization, and organizational goals direct the behavior of public relations practitioners. What makes Hazelton and Long's (1988) model unique is that it provides suggestions and advice for the entire public relations process, not just one step and it also embodies the importance of unique environments. However, the model faces the problem that most public relations models face, it is better applied to private sector communications, which can be seen by Hazelton and Long's definition of public affairs as corporate relations with government rather than communication originating from government (Liu & Horsley, 2007). And much like Grunig's models, it hasn't taken into account

the broken relationship between the public sector and its publics and the need to create a model

that has elements that work toward creating a trusting relationship.

Trust

A study was conducted by Cook & Gronke (2007) to measure the trust level of

Americans in the government. The study consisted of a survey of the American public that

measured trust levels on a seven point Likert scale. The study found that low trust in government

and low confidence in institutions reflected skepticism toward the government. This skepticism

did not lead to a drop in participation, but instead it lead to an unwillingness of the public to

presume that political authorities should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Some of the questions yielded the following results. The question was asked "do you trust

government to do what is right," and most of the (54%) respondents said either "only some of the

time" or "almost never." When asked whether "government is run by a few big interests looking

out for themselves or if it is run for the benefit of the people," 63% of respondents answered,

"run by a few big interests."

Trust is absolutely fundamental to a functioning relationship and to society in general. It

is central to the practice of public relations. No organization can be considered credible without

the trust of its publics, in this case the government cannot be considered credible unless the

American people have trust in them. Trust is one of the central components to a satisfactory

relationship (Rawlins, 2007). Trust however must be earned; it doesn't come easily (Pechtold,

2005). A more transparent government can lead to greater trust. Williams (2005) found that the

degree of organizational transparency is positively correlated to the degree of trust in an

organization. Rawlins (2008) also found that trust and transparency are related. Rawlins found

that organizations that share important and substantial information with their publics, open

themselves up to their publics for criticism, give regular reports, encourage participation and input from their publics are more likely to be trusted.

According to a study conducted by Cooper, Knotts and Brennan (2008), the prevailing thought that citizens with higher levels of political trust are more likely to grant bureaucratic discretion to public administrators than citizens with lower levels of trust has not been proven, And there is little empirical evidence showing that trust is actually associated with citizens' willingness to cede policymaking power to government at the federal government level. However the study found that trust in local government was found to be an important predictor of support from citizens but trust in state and national government seemed to have no effect. This study suggests that the need to better understand trust and therefore transparency in order to create trust is most important at the local level where it has the greatest affect on the citizens and the government. A big part transparency that leads to trust is relationship building. In order for a relationship to be successful, there must be trust, which means that relationship building is also an important part of a transparent and therefore trusted government. According to Hon and Grunig (1999), "the fundamental goal of public relations is building relationships with an organization's key constituencies" (p. 2). Hon and Grunig created a study that provided correlational evidence between success in relationship building and public relations departments that set objectives and measure outcomes of their communications programs. That correlation tells us that organizations that communicate effectively develop better relationships. These relationships create environments where communicators and their publics better understand each other because they understand each other. These findings provide strong evidence for the need to set objectives in public relations and communications efforts. These findings can easily be applied to the government public relations and communications, and the three-dimensional

model for transparency in government communications does just that, it sets objectives for any government communications plan. With established objectives in communication, government entities will begin to create stronger and long lasting relationships with their publics.

Transparency

Transparency in government can be defined as the availability of information on matters that are pertinent to the public, the opportunity for citizens to participate in political decisions, and the accountability of government to legal processes and to public opinion (Cotterrell, 1999). Heald (2006) classified government transparency, as transparency inward. Heald described transparency as an entity that can be watched and observed by those on the outside. It can be increased by the willful, liberal, and proactive release of information to the public.

When studying transparency researchers have asked why the concept of transparency is so important. Do citizens care if its government is transparent as long as they are making the people happy? According to research by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001) as published by Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn (2001), the idea that people become dissatisfied and untrusting of government when they make undesirable policy decisions and creates undesirable outcomes isn't the case. It is the failure of government processes that are creating a distrust and dislike of the American government   If this idea is true, then a transparent government would make for a more trusting and satisfied people. Transparency is important because public cynicism and distrust in government often comes with negative consequences. Currently voter turnout is low, and citizens are less and less compliant with government decisions (Chanley et al., 2001). Transparency is vital to a successful democracy.

The concept of transparency, openness and the need for effective communication by the government has been around for a long time. In a letter written in 1930 by Stephen Tallents, the

public relations officer of the Great Britain Post Office, he said that a government agency must make its publicity truthful, clear, attractive, and in harmony with its surroundings: publicity "is as definite and as compelling a need of government as is advertising to a private corporation. . . The enormous expansion of governmental activity and of the demands of the people upon their government ... give it validity today" (Ponder, 1990). Florini (2004) stated, "Transparency and openness are the bedrocks of democracy, the driver of prosperity, and even a guarantor of security. Citizens around the world are demanding that their governments open their files. And governments are responding. This trend toward transparency holds great promise for improving the state of the world. It is indispensable for reducing corruption" (p. 18).

Piotrowski and Borry (2009) explained that openness and transparency in government are widely and almost entirely accepted as being a part of good government. And, transparency helps publics and constituents see and understand what their governments are doing on their behalf.

Information dissemination is a government agency's democratic responsibility and they seem to be disseminating information but the idea of building relationships with constituents has not been valued (Martinelli, 2006). Transparency should exist at all times and not just at times of elections. Governments need to inform their citizens of their actions and offer the people mechanisms through which there are punishments for government actors who aren't being truthful and representative. Transparency of governments toward their citizens is a necessary part of government accountability, and a necessary part of a true democracy (Grigorescu, 2003). Government communicators need to look at two-way communications models and stakeholder management theories to better understand the need to create healthy relationships with their publics. There are many positive benefits of transparent communication including; increased

trust, a stronger democracy, increased public support, increased compliance, and increased understanding by the public of the government entity and its actions (Fairbanks et al., 2007). According to the 2009 Edelman trust barometer, trust is low not just in the United States, but all over the world. In the study, Antonio Martins de la Cruz, the foreign affairs minister of Portugal and an Edelman advisor, stated pertaining to the trust lost by the citizens of the European Union to its leadership, "only with transparent policies will the government be able to regain the confidence of the European public. Transparency is essential to stabilize the situation."

Federal v. Local government

Distrust in government is soaring, and scholars have found that the greatest decrease in trust is in the federal government. Public evaluations of the U.S. government have grown increasingly worse over the past decades, survey data indicate that confidence and trust in the government are at an all time low (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2001). However, over time, trust and confidence in state and local governments have remained fairly consistent and comparatively high, while trust for the federal government has been lower and slightly more volatile" (Kincaid & Cole, 2006). Evidence suggests that trust in government is somewhat higher at the state level (Hetherington & Nugent, 2001) and highest at the local level (Bowler & Donovan, 2002) These differences can most likely be attributed to the fact that citizens have more contact with their local government officials and generally identify more with smaller governments (Box & Musso, 2004). For this reason, the study seeks to better understand transparency at the local level.

However, while trust in local governments isn't dropping as dramatically as it is at the federal level, according to a 2007 study by the National League of Cities titled "The State of America's Cities: Local Democracy," lack of trust in government and citizen disengagement has been reported by many city officials as a challenge to successful local governance and a

contributor to the recent rise in anti-government measures. Municipal government is where citizens most directly participate in our democratic government and municipal government leaders need to ensure continuous openness and dialogue with the public (Glassman, 2008). That being said, local and municipal governments are where transparency must start. The local level of politics is where citizens are most involved and have the most one on one contact with government. Local governments have made significant progress in recent years in widening the structures for communicating with, and engaging citizens, however, there remains considerable opportunity and need for improvement (Andrews, Cowell, Downe, Martin, & Turner, 2008).

According to Lee (2001) few studies have been done that seek to understand the role of communications within government entities or public agencies. And those studies that have examined communications and the government have mostly focused on government at the federal level and they have focused on the news media.

Transparency and The News Media

This section seeks to explain the relationship between the news media the government. This relationship is important because it demonstrates the crucial need for transparency. Poor public perception is one of the greatest constraints distinguishing government public relations from corporate public relations. Public sector organizations also face a much higher level of media scrutiny than do private organizations (Liu & Horsley, 2007).

The public communication model (Heise, 1985) recognizes that an aggressive free and independent press is vital to the democratic process in the United States. It also recognizes that the relationships the federal and many state and local government have with the press will often times be adversarial rather than harmonious. It also assumes, however, that government officials will not in any way or by any means try and inhibit the press and their pursuit of news. Heise's

model explains that while government acknowledges journalism's important role in information

dissemination, it should not rely on media alone to communicate with publics (Heise, 1985).

The news media play a central role in creating and shaping public perception of

government. This is why, with the need to secure favorable and supportive media coverage, the

government or government agencies deploy a variety of political communications strategies to

project a positive image of themselves (Heffernan, 2006).

The news media can be a friend and also a foe to government communicators. One of the

first researchers to name the media as a culprit to blame for the distrust of the American

government was Robinson (1970). In affixing the blame for political malaise on television and

the news media, Robinson in essence introduced the hypothesis that televisions' critical and so

often dramatized coverage of politics and government has increased distrust of politicians and

government institutions, and heightened feelings of political powerlessness amongst the

American public.

"We find that conflict-laden television coverage decreases public evaluations of political

institutions, trust in leadership, and overall support for political parties and the system as a whole

(Forgette & Morris, 2006)." This concept of political dissatisfaction due to the news media has

been named the spiral of disaffection. This results when the media and mediated campaign

tactics turn off voters and their publics. This turn-off leads to a downturn in voter and political

participation. Citizens become more disenchanted and apathetic and turn themselves off to the

political process (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001). The news media is an important part of

transparency because government must use the news media to practice transparency.

Government efforts for communications have shifted from focusing on annual reports to relying

on the media to share government information with the public (Lee, 1999).

This relationship that government has with the news media is a major factor in the need for a model of communications that is focused on the role of the government communicator whose role is oftentimes that of liaison to the press or the news media. If the government communicator focuses on transparency, that message will be relayed to the news media who will in turn relay that to the public.

Conclusion

The research shows that the level of trust between America and its government is low. The research also tells us that many of the current public relations and communications models that exist were created for private organizations and not government entities. There are too many relationships, expectations, standards, and so forth for a communications model created for the private sector to be completely applicable in the public sector. Therefore, this study seeks to do two things. First, it seeks to take a newly created public communications model, the three-dimensional model in government communications, and apply it at the city level of government. This model is unique in that it seeks to create more transparent governments by creating guidelines and suggestions for government communicators to follow. The literature is lacking in this area. Theories of how to communicate abound, but there needs to be a model that gives government communicators the tools to be more transparent. The three-dimensional model does just that. This study will take the three- dimensional model and find out if city communicators are doing what it suggests. Second, the study then takes parts of test for transparency to determine if these 601 largest cities are transparent according to their city communicator. The correlation between the two will show us if communicating by the guidelines established by the three-dimensional model makes a city more transparent in the eyes of its communicator, and if

these city communicators are practicing the guidelines created by the three-dimensional model in government communications.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Transparency has been amply described in the literature, but to briefly give an operational definition, government transparency is availability of information to citizens, the opportunity for citizens to ask questions and be involved, and the accountability of government for their decisions, actions, and the way they spend tax payer money. The literature points to the need for a transparent government so that citizens will trust their leaders and leaders can serve the people. The literature also points to the local level of government as the place transparency should begin. This research seeks through a multi-part survey to determine if following the tents of the three dimensional model for government transparency leads to a more transparent government, and what effect other demographic factors may have on the level of transparency according to the city communicator. The specific research questions of this study are as follows:

RQ1: *Can you quantitatively test the three-dimensional model?*

RQ2: *How do the surveyed city communicators evaluate themselves as a city in regards to transparency on each of the four parts of the three- dimensional model for transparency in Government communication? Part 1: Valuing Transparency Part 2: Organizational Support Part 3: Communication Practices Part 4: Provision of Resources*

RQ3: *How do the surveyed city communicators evaluate themselves as a city in regards to transparency according to Rawlins test for transparency?*

RQ4: *Which of the four parts of the three-dimensional model best predicts the overall score for transparency?*

RQ5: *Cities that answered yes to question 8, "Has your city recently experienced any political scandals or incidents which you feel may have caused a sense of distrust with its citizens toward the city government?" will score significantly lower on the overall score for transparency.*

H1: *The higher the city scores on the overall three-dimensional model for transparency section of the survey, the higher they will score on Rawlins' test for transparency.*

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research Design

There are three different types of quantitative research: descriptive, quasi-experimental, and experimental. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs are created to determine cause and effect. This study is primarily descriptive in nature. Descriptive standards are designed to gain information about a certain characteristic or set of characteristics within a particular field of study (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003). In this case the field of study is that of city communicators and the characteristic or set of characteristics is transparency. There are many quantitative strategies, including survey research, and this study employs that strategy. Surveys provide quantitative descriptions of attitudes, trends, and opinions (Cressman, 2009).

A short survey was created on the Internet using Qualtrics.com and sent to a census group of the Public Information Officers in each of the 601 largest cities in America. Surveys have become a very widely used and acknowledged tool in the research world, and are considered to be one of the best and most accurate methods of research for determining information about populations (Rea & Parker, 1997).

Online Survey

There are four major survey methods: online surveys, mail surveys, telephone surveys, and face-to-face or personal interview surveys. An online survey is the method this study employs. Online surveys are relatively new compared to other methods, but the method is becoming extremely popular. Some experts have even gone as far as to predict that all survey research will be done online in the future (Schonlau et al., 2001). Archer (2003) sums up some of the advantages and disadvantages of online surveys versus mail surveys. Some of the advantages are as follows: reduced waiting time for responses, reduced implementation time,

reduced surveying costs, the elimination of postage, paper, data entry time and costs, the availability of data in numerical format and often time simplicity or instantaneous importing of data into data analysis programs. Some of the potential disadvantages include: limited possible computer literacy among respondents, different screen configurations, and the sometimes instantaneous decision not to respond. These disadvantages have been recognized, and efforts have been made to overcome them.

Evans and Mathur (2005) also explained some of the major strengths of online surveys. Flexibility is a major strength. Online surveys can be conducted in a number of ways: a visit to a website with an invitation to click and link and take a survey, an email with the survey attached, an email with a link to a survey URL. The survey in this study will be administered through an email with a link that directs them to a survey. Evans and Mathur (2005) also explained that online surveys enjoy speed and timeliness. Surveys can be administered without worrying about the period of time it takes to get to its respondents. With this research, the survey reaches the respondents e-mail box within moments of it being sent. Online surveys are also innovative and respondents can click on a URL sent by e-mail and be transported to a feature-rich web survey tool that is directive and powerful. Convenience is another strength presented by Evans & Mather. Respondents can take as long as they want on each question and they can respond at whatever time is convenient for them. Lastly is the ease of analysis and data entry. Wilson and Laskey (2003) share that once a respondent has completed an online survey, the responses are ready to be tabulated and analyzed. Often time the survey tool has data analysis software as a part of the software program and the data entry is automatic. This is the case for this study. For these reasons, on online survey was the method of surveying used in this study. The survey software that was used is Internet-based Qualtrics which not only houses the survey but it also

stores and analyzes data. There is therefore less opportunity for data error and confusion. The data was not stored on a computer, but rather online. The only people with password access to the data were myself and one other researcher, my committee chair.

The study consists of a 36-question online survey that sought to determine transparency and how it is valued within city governments from the perspective of government communicators. The survey was created based upon the tenets of the three dimensional model for transparency in government and Rawlins' previously created survey which tests for transparency. Rawlins' test was originally created for stakeholders to rate the transparency of the organization in which they had a stake. This study will use the test differently in that city communicators will evaluate themselves and determine their own transparency. The survey was intended for the Public Information Officer for the cities in America with a population of 50,000 or more. According to the 2000 US Census, there are 601 American cities with a population of 50,000 or more. Each city had a different name for their Public Information Officer, so the survey was sent to the individual in each city office who oversees communications, public relations, public affairs, and/or media relations for the city and/ or the Mayor's office. For the remainder of the study, this individual will be referred to as the Public Information Officer. The email addresses were collected from the city websites, and where there was no specific Public Information Officer listed, an email was sent or a call was made to the city requesting an email address for the individual best meeting the description. After gathering the email addresses, an email was sent to each city Public Information Officer with a brief letter of explanation of the study and a link to the online survey. The survey was created through Qualtrics, an online survey software.

The survey consists of 14 questions; the first 12 questions are open ended and multiple choice type questions. These questions are demographic and basic informational questions to learn more about the cities' participating in the survey. The answers to these questions help the researchers to better understand some of the characteristics that may lead to certain behaviors or beliefs on the part of the city communicator. The second major part of the survey, question 13, has 31 parts. The 31 parts are Likert style statements on a 7-point Likert scale with one being strongly disagree and seven being strongly agree. There were two statements where the Likert response given needed to be inverted once the data was collected. The statements were statement 27, and 31. Both statements had values where less agreement would denote a higher level of transparency rather than more agreement denoting a higher level of transparency which is how the other statements were written. The first 21 Likert statements are based on the tenets of the three dimensional model, and statements 22-31 are based on Rawlins (2008) test for transparency. Within the three dimensional model, there are four different parts, the parts are: Value Transparency, Communication Practices, Organizational Support, and Provision of Resources. The statements were categorized as follows:

Figure 1

Construct	Value Transparency (A)	Communication Practices (B)	Organizational Support (C)	Provision of Resources (D)
Statement	1. Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	3. I do my best to regularly inform the public of important city matters	8. The mayor/or city executive regularly consents to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	19. The city website is user friendly and easy to navigate
	4. Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	7. I regularly consent to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	9. The city provides information to its citizens in a way that is readily and easily available	20. There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency
	5. I regularly try and help others within the organization understand the importance of transparency	11. There is an effective policy/protocol to follow within the city structure to dissem-inate information to the public	10. The city regularly holds meetings where the public is invited to participate and give feedback and suggestions	21. There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget
	6. Transparency and openness is always the best policy with the citizens of my city	14. I regularly send news and city information (i.e. press releases) to local media outlets	16. The general feeling and attitude among the city employees is one of openness and trust	
	12. The city government is transparent and open with its citizens		17. I have a respected place at the management table or a place in decision making	
	15. The city management/ leadership values transparency		18. Generally speaking this city wants to know how its decisions are affecting its citizens	

The three dimensional model explains what is needed to communicate transparently as a government entity, and Likert statements 1-22 attempt to cover the model. The statements chosen to be a part of the survey touched on all four parts of the model. There are many more statements that could have been added to the survey but for the purpose of keeping the survey from being too time consuming and too large, the Likert statements were kept to 31. The survey originally included five additional Likert statements, but the survey was shortened after testing the survey both because of length and content. The survey was tested with one former city

communicator of a city with a population of more than 100,000, and three city communicators

from cities with a population fewer than 50,000. As a result of the pre-testing, the survey was

shortened and some of the questions and statements were re-worded or changed completely. Also,

after the survey was sent out and completed, two more statements were taken from the first set of

21 because they did not fit well within the four constructs. Statements two and thirteen were

removed from the analysis. Statement two stated, "I fear that citizens of my city/town are not

able to fully and appropriately understand the information they receive from our city

government." Statement thirteen stated, "The city needs to put greater focus on better

communications practices." The first section of Likert statements (1-21) is intended to determine

if according to the city communicators, the city is using the tenets of the three dimensional

model. The study doesn't seek to determine if the city communicators are using the model

advertently or inadvertently, and the survey never mentions the model directly. The second

section of the Likert statements (22-31) comes from Rawlins (22-31) and are based on Rawlins

test for transparency and not the three dimensional model. This part of the survey measures the

level of transparency of the city according to the city communicator. As previously mentioned,

Rawlins' transparency test was created with the intent to be taken by stakeholders who were

rating the organization in which they have a stake, but for this study it was used for the

government communicators to rate their cities' transparency. The purpose of the survey is to

validate the three-dimensional model and to find correlations between following the tenets of the

three dimensional model and the score for transparency. Question 36 is open ended and

exploratory in nature. The open-ended question at the end of the survey is a venting question. It

is beneficial to use venting or open-ended questions where the respondent is asked to add any

information, comments, or opinions that may not have been addressed in the survey. This

question gives the respondent the opportunity to clarify an answer or share something that wasn't allowed by the pre-determined answer choices (Rea & Parker, 1997). The open-ended question also allows for a more qualitative approach within in a quantitative study.

Delimitations

The study delimited public information officers in the 601 largest cities in the United States of America. The survey was sent exclusively to these individuals. This census group was selected for a number of reasons. The original intent of the study was to take randomly selected cities in America and survey the Public Information officers from those cities; however, the majority of cities with a population of 50,000 or fewer do not have a specific public information officer or anything of the sort. There are thousands of cities, towns, villages, incorporated areas, etc. in the United States that would have been included in the sample otherwise. Many of these cities or towns have fewer than 1,000 people. While the study only took into account larger cities, the findings can still be used and applied to smaller cities and towns.

Strengths

The quantitative nature of the study greatly decreases bias by the researcher. Because the responses are pre-determined and must be chosen from a list, and the survey is administered without the presence of researcher, bias and individual interpretation by the researchers is greatly lessened. Also, the responses were completely confidential, which encourages absolute honesty. The survey was created with the input of three researchers, as well as tested by a former city public information officer who gave suggestions for changes in the survey to make it clear and understandable. One of the greatest strengths of the study is that it analyzes local government communications, where very little research has been done in reference to transparency.

The quantitative nature of this study also lends to a more recent snapshot of the local communication field. The survey allows respondents to give a quick overview of how they view transparency without the time intensive task of interviewing only a handful of Public Information Officers and analyzing their responses. Thus, a larger sample was obtained in this study compared to a qualitative study, and more insights were brought into the findings than would have been in a qualitative study. One of the greatest strengths of a quantitative approach is that the results can, to a certain extent, be generalized.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS & RESULTS

Demographic Findings

As previously stated, the survey was originally mailed to 601 email addresses. The

addresses were compiled from city websites and phone calls to city offices. Fifty-three

individuals specifically opted out of taking the survey which is 8.8%, and 295 individuals took

the survey. The survey did not require every question to be answered, and therefore, the total

number of answers for each question varied. Of the 295 respondents, 247 completed the survey.

The 247 completed surveys represent a 41% response rate. Considering the population

(government communication professionals), 41% is very respectable response rate for this type

of study. The level of responses can be attributed to the many reminder emails and pleas for

support to the respondents. The surveys that were not completed were thrown out. Survey

completion is defined by a respondent who viewed every question. As stated earlier, it was not

required to answer every question. The decision was made to not make every question required

to be answered in order to allow public information officers the option of opting out of questions

they may not have felt comfortable answering.

The respondents came from a variety of city sizes. As previously stated, all participants

had a population of 50,000 or more, but that was the only qualification. The graph below shows

the populations of those that completed the survey.

Figure 2

Population Size	Count
50,000-90,000	114
90,000-130,000	66
130,000-170,000	23
170,000-250,000	17
250,000+	27
Total	247

Each of the city communicators also reported to a different individual within the city structure. Sixty seven reported directly to the mayor, one to the deputy mayor, 138 to the city manager, 43 to a deputy city manager, 4 to a member of the city council, and twenty-seven respondents said other. One hundred ninety eight of the cities have a cable television station, 67 do not. Of the 198 cities that have a television station, 178 broadcast city meetings. Of the respondents, 246 have a city website where citizens can ask questions and share feedback electronically. Only eight cities said they didn't have a way for citizens to share feedback and ask questions electronically.

One hundred sixty nine cities have a council/city manager structure with a ceremonial mayor, 75 have a strong mayor/council structure, 9 have a mayor/city council with a ceremonial mayor, 3 have a commission structure, and 5 answered other.

Research Question Findings

RQ1: *Can you quantitatively test the three-dimensional model?*

The survey this study employs consists of questions that were created to represent all aspects of the three-dimensional model. To test the reliability and internal consistency of the survey, Cronbach's alpha test was run on each of the four constructs that make up the three-dimensional model section of the survey. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The Cronbach's alpha for the construct measuring how much the communicator values transparency is .76. The score for the part of the survey that tests for communication practices is .59. The score for the statements pertaining to organizational support is .67. Lastly, the score for the statements pertaining to provision of resources is .76. The score for the second part of the survey, and the section that measures transparency from Rawlins' test is .85. It is recognized that two of the four scores for the parts of

the three-dimensional model are below a .70. The Cronbach's alpha scores are sufficient for an

exploratory study but it is recognized that certain items within the survey need to be improved

for future studies. This provides evidence that the three-dimensional model for transparency can

be tested quantitatively.

RQ2: *How do the surveyed city communicators evaluate themselves as a city in regards to*

transparency on each of the four parts of the three-dimensional model for transparency in

Government communication? Part 1: Valuing Transparency Part 2: Organizational Support

Part 3: Communication Practices Part 4: Provision of Resources

One of the main purposes of the study is to determine if the three-dimensional model can

be quantitatively tested by operationalizing the constructs. Below is a table that shows the

quantitative test that was created. The table answers RQ2 by explaining how the city

communicators evaluated themselves. The table also shows the number of respondents for each

question, the mean, and the percentage of those that agree with the statements. The respondents

were given the statements on a 7-point Likert scale where their levels of agreement ranged from

strongly disagree to strongly agree with the center point being neutral. The percent in the table

that shows agreement, includes all those who somewhat agreed, agreed, and strongly agreed.

Figure 3

Value Construct

Statement	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage Agree*	*Mean*
Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	246	98.4	6.63
Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	246	99.2	6.65
I regularly try and help others within the organization understand the importance of transparency	245	94.7	6.34
Transparency and openness is always the best policy with the citizens of my city	245	97.6	6.37
The city government is transparent and open with its citizens	245	96.4	6.13

The City management/leadership values transparency	244	95.5	6.18

Communication Construct

I do my best to regularly inform the public of important city matters	245	99.6	6.62
I regularly consent to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	245	91.9	6.44
There is an effective policy/protocol to follow within the city structure to disseminate information to the public	245	87.8	5.78
I regularly send news and city information (i.e. press releases) to local media outlets	245	96.0	6.52

Organizational Support Construct

The mayor/or city executive regularly consents to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	244	95.3	6.38
The city provides information to its citizens in a way that is readily and easily available	245	97.6	6.27
The city regularly holds meetings where the public is invited to participate and give feedback and suggestions	245	95.5	6.39
The general feeling and attitude among the city employees is one of openness and trust	244	76.2	5.25
I have a respected place at the management table or a place in decision making	244	85.6	5.74
Generally speaking this city wants to know how its decisions are affecting its citizens	242	94.7	6.13

Resources Construct

The city website is user friendly and easy to navigate	245	82.5	5.47
There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency	243	53.0	4.19
There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget	244	47.5	4.04

The questions that yielded the strongest positive responses came from the section pertaining to valuing transparency, the two highest positively responded statements were, "As a city government communicator I recognize the benefits of a more open and transparent local government." The question received 246 responses and 99.2% of all those surveyed agreed with the statement. The second highest positive responded statement was, "Transparency (openness)

in government is a vital part of a successful democracy." There were 246 respondents to this statement, and 98.4% of them agreed with the statement.

The statements with the lowest positive responses came from the section pertaining to provision of resources. The lowest positive response came from the statement that reads, "There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget." This statement yielded 244 responses and only 47.5% agreed with the statement. The statement with the second lowest positive response was the statement that read, "There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency." This statement yielded 243 responses and 53% agreed with the statement.

RQ3: *How do the surveyed city communicators evaluate themselves as a city in regards to transparency according to Rawlins test for transparency?*

The mean score the city communicators gave themselves as a whole based on the statements pertaining to Rawlins' test for transparency is 5.64. The individual means from statements six and ten were inverted in order to determine the overall mean, because they were reverse questions. The questions were reverse in that a lower score on the 7-point Likert scale was a more positive response toward transparency. Figure 5 below shows how the city communicators evaluated themselves on each individual question, as well as the number of respondents for each question, and the percentage of those agreeing with the statements.

Figure 5
Rawlins Transparency Test

Statement	No. of Respondents	Percentage Agree	Mean
The city government takes the time with its citizens to understand who they are and what they need	242	80.6	5.31
The city government involves its citizens to help them identify the information they need	242	79.8	5.36
The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues	242	69.4	5.13
The city government provides information that is relevant to its citizens	241	94.6	6.05

The city government provides information that is easy for the citizens to understand	242	94.7	5.85
The city provides only part of the story to its citizens	242	10	2.55
The city is open to criticism by its citizens	242	93.1	5.75
The city provides accurate information to its citizens	241	98.4	6.43
The city freely admits when it has made mistakes	243	81.9	5.55
The city only discloses information when it is required	242	11.2	2.45

City communicators scored themselves the highest on the statement that read, "The city provides accurate information to its citizens." This statement had a 98.4% agreement rate. The city communicators scored themselves the lowest on the statement that read, "The city government involves its citizens to help them identify the information they need," which had a 79.8% rate of agreement. Interestingly, the city communicators second lowest score was for the statement which read, "The city freely admits when it has made mistakes," with an 81.9% agreement rate.

RQ4: *Which of the four parts of the three-dimensional model best predicts the overall score for transparency?*

In order to determine which of the four parts of the three-dimensional model best predicts for the overall score for transparency, a step-wise multiple regression analysis was run. The dependent variable in the regression analysis is the overall score for transparency. The step-wise regression analysis built three models. The third model was the strongest, and it consisted of three of the four parts of the three-dimensional model. The model excluded one part of the three-dimensional model, valuing transparency, because it did not make a significant contribution to predicting the change in variance of the dependent variable. The adjusted R-squared was .565, which means that 56.5% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the

independent variable. The ANOVA found the results statistically significant $F(3, 219)=97.2$, $p<.001$

$F(3, 219)=97.19, p<.001$.

Figure 6

Variable	B	SEB	B
Organizational Support	1.152	0.112	0.576*
Provision of Resources	0.386	0.097	0.204*
Communication Practices	0.349	0.16	0.102*

$F(3, 219)=97.2, p<.000$
*$p<.001$

Figure 6 shows that the three remaining parts of the three-dimensional model significantly predict the overall transparency score. While all three parts are significant, organizational support is the single greatest predictor of overall transparency, while valuing transparency has no significant effect on the dependent variable which is the overall score for transparency.

RQ5: *Cities that answered yes to question 8, "Has your city recently experienced any political scandals or incidents which you feel may have caused a sense of distrust with its citizens toward the city government?" will score significantly lower in each of the four parts of the three-dimensional model and on the overall score for transparency.*

To answer this question, a T-Test was run. Figure 7 shows that cities that experienced a scandal scored significantly lower on overall transparency and the overall three-dimensional model than cities that didn't recently experience a scandal. The test also determined that cities who answered yes to a scandal scored significantly lower on the section of the survey that measured provision of resources, and organizational support. Figure 7 also shows that recently experiencing a scandal had no significant effect on communication practices or valuing transparency.

Figure 7

Variable	M	SD	t	df	p
Overall Transparency Score			-3.03	226	0.00
Yes	5.39	0.77			
No	5.74	0.76			
Provision of Resources			-2.84	235	0.01
Yes	4.19	1.33			
No	4.75	1.35			
Organizational Support			-2.17	234	0.03
Yes	5.88	0.64			
No	6.08	0.63			
Communications Practices			-1.79	236	0.08
Yes	6.23	0.69			
No	6.39	0.58			
Value Transparency			-0.51	236	0.61
Yes	6.36	0.55			
No	6.40	0.47			
Overall Score for three-dimensional model			-2.71	227	0.01
Yes	22.69	2.34			
No	23.62	2.29			

 H1: *The higher the city scores on the overall three-dimensional model for transparency score, the higher they will score on Rawlins' test for transparency .*

To test this hypothesis, a simple bi-variate regression test was run. The test found that there is a positive relationship between the overall score on the three-dimensional model and the overall score for transparency. The regression test was conducted to investigate how well the overall score of three-dimensional model section of the survey predict overall transparency. The results were statistically significant $F(1, 221)=219.3, p<.001$. The adjusted R^2 value is .496. This indicates that 50% of the variance in overall transparency scores can be explained by the overall score on the three-dimensional model section of the survey.

Additional Findings

The final question of the survey was the open ended or venting question. This question yielded qualitative results rather than quantitative, and gave the opportunity to learn more from

the city communicators. It should be noted that the open-ended question yielded very similar

findings to the Fairbanks et al (2007) original study. The city communicators shared some of the

very same frustrations and sentiments as the federal government communicators.

Sixty-five respondents left comments in the final venting question, which asked: "Do you

have any comments you would like to share pertaining to your role as city communicator or your

attitude toward transparency in government communications? Please feel free to share anything

you feel appropriate or necessary. Also, if you found a question difficult to answer for one reason

or another, feel free to explain."

The most recurring theme or idea shared in this final question was some of the specific

challenges the city communicators face in their quest for transparency. The single greatest

recurring challenge mentioned was that of inadequate staff, money, & resources. Some of the

statements were as follows:

- It's easier now for information---and disinformation---to get out...partial
  information is blogged about, speculated upon, and parsed. Scandals at the
  national level have left everyone more suspicious and the complicated nature of
  finance and the State Legislature changing the rules on everything from revenue
  streams to property tax caps means accuracy is constantly changing... it's always
  a challenge.

- We try to be as transparent as we can, but we don't have enough communications
  staff to detail everything we do to the public. To further complicate matters, local
  government has many duties, responsibilities, and programs; citizens often don't
  have time to track every issue that may be of concern to them. We attempt to use

all the communications tools we have at our disposal to try to make as much of an impact as we can.

- Unfortunately, during these difficult budget times, governments are no different than their counterparts in the private sector cutting into communications and outreach budgets when those services are most needed and our customers need to be informed more than ever.

- I think we do an excellent job of keeping our city transparent with the staff and funding we have but I would still say we are underfunded and staffed. The reason these questions are hard is because communications are a bit of a black hole in that you could always use more funding and staff; there is always something more that could be done, or what you do could be done better.

- It is difficult for me to be as proactive with communications as I would like since my real duty is Assistant to the Mayor. I would like time to work with each department to continuously put out information.

- Our website is our weakness in regards to external communications. The problem is due to lack of staffing, not lack of ability.

CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study set out to determine a number of things. Firstly, it sought to give credibility and validity to the three-dimensional model in government communications by testing it quantitatively rather than qualitatively. The original study from which the three-dimensional model originated was a qualitative study that occurred at the federal level of government. The findings of this study quantitatively support what was already qualitatively found in the Fairbanks et al. (2007) study that created the three-dimensional model. Fairbanks et al. (2007) discovered that federal communicators did value transparency, however they ran into the same problems that were found in the current study. Government communicators at both the federal level and city level need greater organizational support, more resources, and they need to better their communication practices. The current study unlike the previous study was able to determine that organizational support was the greatest predictor of overall transparency, and that valuing transparency actually has no significant impact on overall transparency. One of the benefits of a quantitative study as opposed to a qualitative study is being able to make predictions and correlations.

This study applied those findings at the local level quantitatively. The study also sought to determine if a city government adhered to the guidelines established in the three-dimensional model of government communication that their level or degree of transparency would increase. The study also sought to determine which of the four parts of the three-dimensional model was the greatest predictor of making a more transparent government. The study found that there is a strong positive correlation between transparency score and adhering to the three dimensional model, meaning that the cities that report a higher mean value of transparency for the first 19 Likert questions also report a higher mean value of transparency for the last 10 statements. The

study therefore provides strong evidence that adhering to the tenets of the three-dimensional model will help to create a more transparent city government. Much like the findings in Fairbanks et al. (2007), this study found that city government communicators strongly value transparency and recognize its benefits. However, city government communicators also face challenges that hold them back in their efforts to be transparent.

One of the greatest challenges that city communicators face in their quest for transparency is the prevalence of scandals in American cities: 28% of the cities that responded to the survey had recently experienced a scandal that caused distrust among its citizen. This study found that cities that have recently experienced a scandal scored significantly lower for transparency than cities that have not recently experienced a scandal. The lesson that can be learned from the data is that scandals are not good for transparency. While the idea seems simple and obvious: political and government scandals seem to be commonplace and are hurting the relationship between Americans and the government. According to the study, scandals are also affecting how government communicators feel their cities score when it comes to transparency. Being involved in scandals hurts the level of trust greatly, and makes transparency more difficult. Scandals cannot always be prevented by the city communicator; however city communicators can often choose how they respond to a scandal. As the city communicators themselves reported in the survey, the cities scored comparatively low on the question pertaining to admitting to mistakes. Transparency can be a tool to building trust.

Another challenge brought to light in the study is that of inadequate staffing and funding. Not only did the survey respondents have the lowest means for the two Likert statements pertaining to adequate staffing and funding, but the open ended venting question also allowed for more information on the subject. The single most recurring theme in the open-ended question

was that of inadequate funding, staff, time, etc. This challenge is one shared by federal communicators and local communicators alike. Communicators at both levels of government expressed concerns over lack of necessary resources.   The study is exploratory and it sought to learn more about the state of America's cities and how they relate to transparency.

One of the most significant and unique findings of the study was which of the four parts of the model most strongly predicts transparency. The survey found that valuing transparency is the category that least strongly predicts transparency. However, it also found that valuing transparency is where city communicators gave themselves the highest scores. This suggests that while city communicators strongly value transparency, it isn't enough to make for a transparent agency. That value must be shared and accepted by the rest of the administration. One of the strongest predictors of transparency was organizational support. Fairbanks et al. (2007) described this organizational support as having the administration and management understand the importance of transparency and making sure that is communicated to the staff. Another important factor is the mission of the agency, and in this case, the city. Organizational support means that the communicator must have a place at the management and decision-making table. It also means that the communicator has the ability to communicate within the office, and with the rest of the staff so that their objectives can be realized. One of the unique factors affecting organizational support within government communications that is dealt with in the corporate world is the politics of re-election and keeping one's job. These findings mean that city communicators must fight to create a respected place within their offices, and they must maintain good relationships with everyone in order to be supported from all directions. A government communicator must have a place at the decision making table.

Ultimately what the research has found is that the cities that follow the tenets of three-dimensional model will be considered by the communicators to be significantly more transparent. Interestingly, the base of the model, which is to value transparency, isn't a strong predictor of transparency as previously stated. However, it is argued that if transparency isn't valued by a city government, the rest of the tenets won't be adhered to. So while valuing transparency isn't enough to make the changes necessary to being more transparent, it is a necessary start. Many cities face challenges in following the tenets, but as the study has found, the other three tenets, provision of resources, communication practices, and organizational support must follow.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Weaknesses & Limitations

It is recognized that this study has its limitations and weaknesses. Because the survey is collecting empirical data and taking a quantitative research approach, the questions only allowed respondents to select among previously determined answers. And where the questions were open ended, they only allowed for short-guided responses. This is one of the common weaknesses of quantitative research. There are always weaknesses associated with quantitative research, but the method was chosen to be able to generalize the findings and apply the findings to cities all over America. Efforts were taken to ensure anonymity so that the respondents could respond freely and honestly, but because of the nature of the survey and job description of a public information officer which is often also a public relations officer or a public affairs officer, the respondents may have responded in a way to make their city appear in a more positive light than what actually exists. Not only would the respondents want to make their cities appear in a positive light, but the survey is also asking them to report on their own behavior and their own performance. Where there is self-reporting, respondents are more likely to make themselves appear in a positive light.

There were some basic limitations to the study including time, funding, and the busy schedule of the respondents. Because of the quantitative nature of the study there was less individual involvement and no personal interaction, only electronic interaction, and therefore it was easier for a respondent to ignore the survey or decide to opt out of the survey. Public Information Officers also have busy schedules and their primary responsibility is to meet the needs of the constituents and not the needs of an academic study. Also, there is no way of knowing if the individual in each city who completed the survey was in fact the person for whom

the survey was intended. There were a few cities that had no specific Public Information Officer or Communications Specialist and the survey was therefore sent to someone in the office who felt as though they were qualified to take it.

Political scandals abound, distrust between American citizens and the government is commonplace, and government communicators face more challenges today than ever before. This study confirmed what previous research has determined: government communicators value transparency, and they recognize its importance in government communications and in society today. However, they face many challenges. It is these challenges that create an even greater need for more focus on research pertaining government communications. This area of research has been greatly neglected in the past and more research is needed. The three-dimensional model for government communications (Fairbanks et al., 2007) represents a start, but there must be more. Government communicators need models and theories with which to work. This study took a previously created model that was designed through qualitative research by studying federal government communicators, and it applied the model to the city government communicators to ascertain if the model could be applied at different levels of government than the original study. Through the application of the model, the study determined that the model can in fact be applied to city communicators and therefore determines to make a number of recommendations for city communicators.

The recommendations are as follows. Firstly, every city office needs an official communications specialist or public information officer. The study found that many cities not unlike many businesses and the federal government are facing budget constraints; however, communications departments are not the departments that need to be cut. If a government entity values transparency, it will encourage it within their departments. City communicators need to

be prepared to work with budget constraints, and recognize the importance of greater focus in communications. City communications specialists need to be a part of the management or executive team within in the city. They need a respected place at the management table.

Secondly, every government communicator needs to have an effective scandal or corruption management plan. This plan would be different than a crisis management plan; this plan needs to be prepared to deal with corruption and scandal, not other crises such as natural disasters, or major events. Often times a city communicator or communications office isn't directly involved in a scandal, but it becomes their job to explain the situation and be the official voice of the city. It is the job of the city communicator to build, maintain, and improve the relationship of trust between a city and its citizens. Also, while this study doesn't seek to measure trust, it recognizes the close relationship between trust and transparency. It also recognizes that a small degree of distrust is what keeps the government on its toes per se. Distrust is the driving force behind the people pushing for transparency.

Thirdly, city communicators need to consider the three-dimensional model for transparency in government communications and follow the guidelines established there. Abiding by these guidelines can make for a more transparent government. As previously stated, government communicators understand how important transparency is in a successful government entity, but they don't always feel supported by the rest of their departments whether it be organizationally or financially. Government communicators need to find a way to work with the resources and support they currently have, while expressing the need for more support, and resources. Every government communicator should be fighting for a place at the decision-making table if they don't already have a place.

Every city communications office is going to face its own challenges whether it is budget constraints, personality conflicts, scandal, apathy, distrust, etc. However, regardless of how many challenges any one city may face, city government communicators cannot abandon the idea of creating a relationship of trust with their citizens through transparency and openness. These recommendations and the findings of this study can be applied to all American cities, both small and large, urban and rural.

Future Research

This study, along with the original Fairbanks study, helps to better understand the challenges government communicators face in their quest for transparency, as well as their strengths and their hopes for the future. This study specifically took a wider look at communicators and seeks to generalize its findings to all city communicators in America. However, the possibilities for future research remain endless; there is still relatively little research done on government communications, specifically state and local government communications. While government communicators have found a way to apply corporate communications and public relations theories to their work, government communications will always be unique and the research must be unique as well.

As aforementioned scandal and government corruption abound, and therefore future research should determine what American citizens expect in terms of transparency and openness. It is as important to study the stakeholders and the primary audience of government communicators as it is to study the communicators themselves.

Those surveyed in this study were quick to share challenges and frustrations, while recognizing the importance of transparency. Future studies should continue to address the challenges that get in the way of effective government communications. There needs to be a

model that government communicators can work from in relation to not just transparency but scandal/crisis management, as well as an effective means of communicating government information in a way that is understandable to its citizens. This study helps to understand city communicators, but there needs to be research looking at statewide agencies as well. Local governments are the place where citizens have the closest contact with their government leaders; the dynamics are somewhat different than at the federal level, especially where the politics of re-election can stand in the way of effective and transparent communication. It would be interesting to continue to study the differences between local government and federal government communications. Future research should also be done to determine if government communicators are given a place at the decision-making table, and are given more support and resources, if transparency would in fact increase. The findings of this study claim that they will, but studies need to take place to determine if in fact the level of transparency will increase.

While this study doesn't answer all the questions pertaining to creating transparent city government communications, it provides a significant contribution and can be a base for future research.

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APPENDIX

Survey and Results

Survey

1. What is your city's population?
   a. 50,000 - 90,000
   b. 90,000 - 130,000
   c. 130,000 - 170,000
   d. 170,000 - 250,000
   e. 250,000+

2. What is your official job title?

3. As a city communicator to whom do you report?
   a. Mayor
   b. Deputy Mayor
   c. City Manager
   d. Deputy City Manager
   e. Other

If other is selected the following question appeared:
You marked other on the previous question, please specify to whom you report:

4. Approximately what percentage of your city's yearly budget is allocated specifically for NON- police/fire department related communications ? (Marketing, PR, media relations, etc.)

5. Does your city have a television station? Yes or No

If yes is selected the following question appeared:
Does your city television station broadcast city meetings?

6. Does your city website have a way for citizens to reach city officials electronically to ask questions and share feedback?

7. What form of City government does your city have?

1. Council/Manager (with a ceremonial mayor)

2. Mayor/Council with a strong mayor structure (Mayor acts as the chief executive officer)

3. Mayor/Council with a weak mayor structure (the mayor is mostly ceremonial)

4. Commission Form

5. Other

If other was selected, the following question appeared:

You marked other as your city government structure. Please explain your government structure:

8. Has your city recently experienced any political scandals or incidents which you feel may have caused a sense of distrust with its citizens toward the city government?

9. Please respond to the following statements based the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy.

I fear that citizens of my city/town are not able to fully and appropriately understand the information they receive from our city government.

As a city government communicator, I do my best to regularly inform the public of important city matters.

As a city government communicator I recognize the benefits of a more open and transparent local government.

As a city government communicator I regularly try and help others within the organization understand the importance of transparency.

Transparency and openness is always the best policy with the citizens of my city.

I regularly consent to requests for interviews and questions from the news media.

The mayor/or city executive regularly consents to requests for interviews and questions from the news media.

The city provides information to its citizens in a way that is readily and easily available.

The city regularly holds meetings where the public is invited to participate and give feedback and suggestions.

There is an effective policy/protocol to follow within the city structure to disseminate information to the public.

The city government is transparent and open with its citizens.

The city needs to put greater focus on better communications practices.

As a city communicator I regularly send news and city information (i.e. press releases) to local media outlets.

The City management/leadership values transparency.

The general feeling and attitude among the city employees is one of openness and trust.

As a city communicator I have a respected place at the management table or a place in decision making.

Generally speaking this city wants to know how its decisions are affecting its citizens.

The city website is user friendly and easy to navigate.

There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency.

There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget.

The city government takes the time with its citizens to understand who they are and what they need.

The city government involves its citizens to help them identify the information they need.

The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

The city government provides information that is relevant to its citizens.

The city government provides information that is easy for the citizens to understand.

The city provides only part of the story to its citizens.

The city is open to criticism by its citizens.

The city provides accurate information to its citizens.

The city freely admits when it has made mistakes.

The city only discloses information when it is required.

10. Do you have any comments you would like to share pertaining to your role as city communicator or your attitude toward transparency in government communications? Please feel free to share anything you feel appropriate or necessary. Also, if you found a question difficult to answer for one reason or another, feel free to explain.

Question 1: What is your city's population?

Answer	Response	%
50,000-90,000	125	45%
90,000-130,000	72	26%
130,000-170,000	28	10%
170,000-250,000	21	8%
250,000+	33	12%
Total	279	100%

Question 3: As a city communicator/information specialist to whom do you report?

Answer	Response	%
Mayor	67	24%
Deputy Mayor	1	0%
City Manager	138	49%
Deputy City Manager	43	15%
City Council/member of the City Council	4	1%
Other	27	10%
Total	280	100%

Question 6: Does your city have a television station?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	198	75%
No	67	25%
Total	265	100%

Question 7: Does your city television station broadcast city meetings?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	178	90%
No	19	10%
Total	197	100%

Question 9: Does your city website have a way for citizens to reach city officials electronically to ask questions and share feedback?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	255	97%
No	8	3%
Total	263	100%

Question 10: What form of City government does your city have?

Answer	Response	%
Council/Manager (with a ceremonial mayor)	169	64%
Mayor/Council (with a strong mayor)	75	28%
Mayor/Council (with a weak mayor)	9	3%
Commission Form	3	1%
Other	10	4%
Total	266	100%

Question 12: Has your city recently experienced any political scandals or incidents which you feel may have caused a sense of distrust with its citizens toward the city government?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	67	28%
No	175	72%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-1: Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	3	1%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	1	0%
Somewhat Agree	2	1%
Agree	66	27%
Strongly Agree	174	71%
Total	246	100%

Question13-2: I fear that citizens of my city/town are not able to fully and appropriately understand the information they receive from our city government.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	29	12%
Disagree	60	24%
Somewhat Disagree	27	11%
Neutral	30	12%
Somewhat Agree	62	25%
Agree	31	13%
Strongly Agree	7	3%
Total	246	100%

Question 13-3: As a city government communicator, I do my best to regularly inform the public of important city matters.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	1	0%
Somewhat Agree	6	2%
Agree	78	32%
Strongly Agree	160	65%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-4: As a city government communicator I recognize the benefits of a more open and transparent local government.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	
Somewhat Disagree	0	
Neutral	2	
Somewhat Agree	4	
Agree	73	
Strongly Agree	167	
Total	246	100%

Question 13-5: As a city government communicator I regularly try and help others within the organization understand the importance of transparency.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	3	1%
Neutral	10	4%
Somewhat Agree	14	6%
Agree	92	37%
Strongly Agree	127	52%
Total	246	100%

Question 13-6: Transparency and openness is always the best policy with the citizens of my city.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	6	2%
Somewhat Agree	20	8%
Agree	97	40%
Strongly Agree	122	50%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-7: I regularly consent to requests for interviews and questions from the news media.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	2	1%
Neutral	17	7%
Somewhat Agree	5	2%
Agree	62	25%
Strongly Agree	158	64%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-8: The mayor/or city executive regularly consents to requests for interviews and questions from the news media.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	2	1%
Somewhat Disagree	3	1%
Neutral	6	2%
Somewhat Agree	16	7%
Agree	79	32%
Strongly Agree	138	57%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-9: The city provides information to its citizens in a way that is readily and easily available.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	1	0%
Neutral	4	2%
Somewhat Agree	32	13%
Agree	93	38%
Strongly Agree	114	47%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-10: The city regularly holds meetings where the public is invited to participate and give feedback and suggestions.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	2	1%
Neutral	8	3%
Somewhat Agree	16	7%
Agree	81	33%
Strongly Agree	137	56%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-11: There is an effective policy/protocol to follow within the city structure to disseminate information to the public.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	5	2%
Somewhat Disagree	11	4%
Neutral	13	5%
Somewhat Agree	42	17%
Agree	101	41%
Strongly Agree	72	29%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-12: The city government is transparent and open with its citizens.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	1	0%
Neutral	6	2%
Somewhat Agree	29	12%
Agree	122	50%
Strongly Agree	85	35%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-13: The city needs to put greater focus on better communications practices.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	9	4%
Disagree	13	5%
Somewhat Disagree	19	8%
Neutral	38	16%
Somewhat Agree	53	22%
Agree	69	28%
Strongly Agree	43	18%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-14: As a city communicator I regularly send news and city information (i.e. press releases) to local media outlets.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	4	2%
Neutral	6	2%
Somewhat Agree	14	6%
Agree	55	22%
Strongly Agree	166	68%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-15: The City management/leadership values transparency.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	2	1%
Neutral	9	4%
Somewhat Agree	33	14%
Agree	100	41%
Strongly Agree	100	41%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-16: The general feeling and attitude among the city employees is one of openness and trust .

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	5	2%
Somewhat Disagree	16	7%
Neutral	36	15%
Somewhat Agree	75	31%
Agree	75	31%
Strongly Agree	36	15%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-17: As a city communicator I have a respected place at the management table or a place in decision making.

Answer	*Response*	*%*
Strongly Disagree	6	2%
Disagree	3	1%
Somewhat Disagree	8	3%
Neutral	18	7%
Somewhat Agree	40	16%
Agree	90	37%
Strongly Agree	79	32%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-18: Generally speaking this city wants to know how its decisions are affecting its citizens.

Answer	*Response*	*%*
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	2	1%
Somewhat Disagree	1	0%
Neutral	10	4%
Somewhat Agree	36	15%
Agree	95	39%
Strongly Agree	98	40%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-19: The city website is user friendly and easy to navigate.

Answer	*Response*	*%*
Strongly Disagree	5	2%
Disagree	7	3%
Somewhat Disagree	18	7%
Neutral	13	5%
Somewhat Agree	55	22%
Agree	90	37%
Strongly Agree	57	23%
Total	245	100%

Question 13-20: There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	18	7%
Disagree	40	16%
Somewhat Disagree	40	16%
Neutral	16	7%
Somewhat Agree	56	23%
Agree	54	22%
Strongly Agree	19	8%
Total	243	100%

Question 13-21: There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	21	9%
Disagree	40	16%
Somewhat Disagree	37	15%
Neutral	30	12%
Somewhat Agree	56	23%
Agree	46	19%
Strongly Agree	14	6%
Total	244	100%

Question 13-22: The city government takes the time with its citizens to understand who they are and what they need.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	2	1%
Disagree	6	2%
Somewhat Disagree	17	7%
Neutral	22	9%
Somewhat Agree	77	32%
Agree	78	32%
Strongly Agree	40	17%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-23: The city government involves its citizens to help them identify the information they need.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	5	2%
Somewhat Disagree	17	7%
Neutral	26	11%
Somewhat Agree	69	29%
Agree	81	33%
Strongly Agree	43	18%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-24: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	5	2%
Somewhat Disagree	21	9%
Neutral	47	19%
Somewhat Agree	59	24%
Agree	78	32%
Strongly Agree	31	13%
Total	242	100%

Question13-25: The city government provides information that is relevant to its citizens.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	5	2%
Neutral	7	3%
Somewhat Agree	32	13%
Agree	120	50%
Strongly Agree	76	32%
Total	241	100%

Question 13-26: The city government provides information that is easy for the citizens to understand.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	1	0%
Somewhat Disagree	2	1%
Neutral	9	4%
Somewhat Agree	58	24%
Agree	116	48%
Strongly Agree	55	23%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-27: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Somewhat Disagree	3	1%
Neutral	1	0%
Somewhat Agree	17	7%
Agree	89	37%
Strongly Agree	131	54%
Total	241	100%

Question 13-28: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	6	2%
Somewhat Disagree	11	5%
Neutral	26	11%
Somewhat Agree	48	20%
Agree	99	41%
Strongly Agree	52	21%
Total	243	100%

Question 13-29: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	74	31%
Disagree	85	35%
Somewhat Disagree	40	17%
Neutral	16	7%
Somewhat Agree	4	2%
Agree	15	6%
Strongly Agree	8	3%
Total	242	100%

Question 13-30: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0%
Disagree	6	2%
Somewhat Disagree	11	5%
Neutral	26	11%
Somewhat Agree	48	20%
Agree	99	41%
Strongly Agree	52	21%
Total	243	100%

Question 13-31: The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues.

Answer	Response	%
Strongly Disagree	74	31%
Disagree	85	35%
Somewhat Disagree	40	17%
Neutral	16	7%
Somewhat Agree	4	2%
Agree	15	6%
Strongly Agree	8	3%
Total	242	100%

Consent form

This survey is for a research-based study pertaining to transparency in local government communications. This survey consists of 28 questions. The expected duration of the survey is approximately 25 minutes.

This research hopes to better understand attitudes toward transparency at local government levels, and to determine the attitude of city communicators toward transparency and their role and relationship within city government. With the knowledge gained from this study, we hope to share this information with city governments and the communications field to make transparency a more important part of government communications.

All your responses will be kept strictly confidential as to your identity. The published research will contain no specific names or cities. This study is quantitative in nature and will include data from hundreds of respondents. If you have any questions, you may contact Laney Hawes, graduate student, Brigham Young University with any questions or concerns about the research. laney.hawes@byu.edu. If you have any other questions or concerns not associated with the research you can contact mark_callister@byu.edu.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. No penalties will result from non-participation or withdrawal from this survey.