

Theoretical Questions

In the context of a study group or on your own, focus on the questions below to guide your investigation. Remember, you will be expected to include citations from your readings to ground your answers.

- 1) Explain how mass communication theory has evolved over time. Where might it be headed next? Is there really any one dominant mass communication theory? Why or why not?
- 2) Explain the origins of propaganda theory and how it offers understanding of both modern global media systems and modern conflict. In your answer, be sure that you include references to major propaganda-oriented communication theories of the 20th century (e.g., behavioralism, magic bullet theories, propaganda theorists like Lasswell and Lippmann.)
- 3) Following Stephen Jay Gould we have identified several qualities of “good theory.” They included testability, falsifiability, refinability, malleability, and extendability. What do these five ideas mean, and how do they together make a theory “good?”
- 5) Elect a professional problem of interest in your field and describe how communications theory can help practitioners resolve such problems. The problem you select can be one you have invented, or it can be a review of a piece of scholarly research. We are particularly interested here in your arguing for the relevance of communications theory in professional life.
- 6) You are employed by a prestigious think tank that is investigating whether violence in television programming has an impact on children. You have been assigned to write a review of literature with the appropriate hypotheses or research questions for such a study.
- 9) Choose one of the following theories—Agenda Setting, Knowledge Gap, Cultivation Analysis, Diffusion of Innovation, Media Dependency, or Uses and Gratifications. Discuss that theory in detail, including a definition of the theory constructs, how the theory is applied in everyday society (if it is), and some history behind the classic study on that particular modern theory.
- 10) Explain the theory on accounts and the application of this theory on crisis communication. What do we learn from this application?
- 11) Select one of the two theories, below and discuss the following: A) Define the concepts of the theory and their relationships. B) Use one of the theories to solve a health-related problem such as AIDS by creating a communication campaign: Demonstrate how the theory could be used to guide your data collection, strategy formulation, execution and assessment of your communication campaign.

- 12) Fully explain selective perception theory. How does the application of this theory to media effects help further our understanding of the role of the mass media in society?
- 13) Explain agenda setting theory. What are the major tenets of agenda-setting theory and how is it different from other media effects theories?
- 14) Summarize current research being done on “Uses and Gratifications” theory across media classes. From that summary present your position on the value to society of this kind of research perspective. Also what is the future of Uses and Gratifications research? Support your position with excerpts from your reading list.
- 15) Compare and contrast social learning/social cognitive theory and the elaboration likelihood model. Trace the development of each theory and discuss how they have been applied to mass communication. What does the research related to each theory tell us about the impact of television and film? Discuss your own ideas for ways that these theories might be applied in your field.
- 16) Drawing from both persuasive and mass communication literature, explain how the media influences our attitudes and opinions. What do different theories say about the factors that mediate the nature and scope of the media's influence? Factors to consider might include but are not limited to differences in media channels, messages, senders, and receivers. Consider both attitude formation and attitude change. Consider different types of messages, news, advertising, movies, etc. and differences in message presentation (types of arguments made etc.).
- 17) What do we mean by “mass communication theory and research?” Develop some criteria which might define the field, then offer a rationale (with some critical discussion) for the studies your typology will surely have excluded. Berger and Chaffee’s (1987) definition of communication science and Reeves’ (1992) notions on what constitutes mass communications theory and research might be good places to start, but where does this leave contemporary calls for a post-positivist approach to mass communication research?
- 18) In recent years mass communications theory has seen the rise of the notion of the active audience. Uses and gratifications theory exemplifies this idea, but it seems that ideas about interactivity now need to be grafted onto the field’s ideas of an active audience. What’s different about our notions of uses and gratifications theory and those of interactive media and how might they be reconciled?
- 19) Frame analysis, at least as conceptualized by Goffman (1974), appears to be more of an individual-level than a general-level theory. So how can we find a role for mass media in this framing perspective, particularly in our multicultural environments? Discuss the utility of frame analysis theory as a guide to our study of public relations communications across different ethnic and cultural groups.

Methodological Questions

As you study the questions below, make certain that your knowledge includes methods of data collection and analysis from both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as their applications, strengths and weaknesses.

1) You are researching audiences of hip hop music. Describe a study designed to understand the needs and motivations of this audience by answering these questions. What is your research question? What theory best frames the research? Which qualitative method is most appropriate and why? Which data collection and analysis techniques will you suggest for this study?

2) Provide an example of theory-driven applied research for developing a communication campaign. Please discuss how the theory may guide your specific steps for data collection and data analysis.

3) Your company has just developed a new Web site to promote its newest product, a humane, citronella spray "anti-bark" collar for dogs. Web-based tracking indicates the site is getting plenty of hits, but you want to know if the content and design of the Web site is effectively getting your key messages across to the target publics. Describe how you would design a study to answer the question(s) the company wants answered.

- * Write your specific question or questions.
- * Explain why the methods you choose are appropriate.
- * Back up your assertions by citing key scholarship in the field.

4) In quantitative research, reliability and validity are determined by such things as sample size and statistical power. A) How might these issues be addressed in qualitative research? B) How would you address them if you were reporting a case study? Be sure to justify your responses and cite your readings.

5) You have been hired by a company that produces and sells an electronic facial muscle stimulator, which is marketed as functioning like a "non-surgical face lift." The organization is very interested in knowing how men and women think about cosmetic surgery and the experiences of people who have such procedures done. A) What is/are your research question(s)? B) What method or methods would you use to answer your question or questions? Be sure to justify the method(s) you choose and cite your readings.

6) US Small Business Administration in OC is considering developing programs to encourage/educate/facilitate inter-ethnic commerce among minority (Asian – Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean - and Hispanic, mainly) business owners. Suppose you are in charge of finding out how the business communities would respond to the idea, and any reasons and concern for their response and what can be done about changing the response, if necessary), and what programs would be necessary to promote and facilitate

the inter-ethnic commerce idea. Your job is to develop a step-by-step plan for research, with specific research goals specified at each step. Use at least two (e.g., Focus group interview, surveys, etc.) research approaches and describe the procedure (sampling, data collection and analysis).

7) What problems arise when the experimental technique is used to study agenda setting? Describe how this might be done.

8) Your university library is concerned about student desires for library hours on Sunday morning (9:00 am to 12:00 pm). They have undertaken a random sample of 1,600 undergraduate students (one-half men, one-half women) in each of four status levels (i.e., 400 freshmen, 400 sophomores, 400 juniors, 400 seniors). If the percentage of students preferring Sunday morning hours are those shown below, what conclusions can the library reach? You may show any statistical test results, if you can.

	Seniors	Juniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
Women	70	53	39	26
Men	30	48	31	27

9) Creswell recommends five qualitative research traditions for investigating communications questions. Discuss each tradition and give an example of an appropriate study for that tradition.

10) The Social Science Research Center at CSUF was recently criticized for acting unethically. If you were a member of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), what penalties (if any) would you impose and why?

11) In his essay "Cordelia's Dilemma" (1995, Ch. 10) Gould writes about publication bias. Assume you and I have done some carefully designed and executed research which is subsequently rejected by the scholarly journal we submit our paper to. We conclude that publication bias drove this rejection. What is publication bias, and what is the likely problem that the journal editors saw in our paper and prompted them to reject it? Construct an argument back to these research journal editors arguing for the inclusion of our study as a meaningful contribution to media scholarship, one with important implications for professional practice in our field. There is no need to argue the quality of our study – take that as a given. We are more interested here in the larger implications of publication bias in our research field.

12) We have reviewed three scholarly journal articles (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003; Ji & McNeal, 2001; Cho et al, 1999) each of which use content analysis to explore multicultural issues in television advertising. Just how useful is this research methodology in delivering on the aspirations of research generally, and more specifically, the three groups of scholars cited here?

13) You have been hired by a think tank interested in the impact of advertisements aimed at preventing young people from smoking cigarettes. What is/are your research question(s) or hypotheses? What method or methods would you use to answer your question or questions? Be sure to justify the method(s) you choose and cite your readings.

14) Write an essay in which you compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Also include the strengths and weaknesses of each in your answer. To illustrate these differences, devise a quantitative and qualitative study dealing with the impact of television violence on the behaviors of young people.

15) Compare and contrast the value, contributions, advantages/disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative methods as they apply to advertising research and argue for the general approach (quantitative vs. qualitative) and specific method within that approach that you like best.

16) You are interested in studying differences in advertising in Western versus Eastern cultures. Develop specific research questions/hypotheses for a study in this area and design a study to test them. Briefly explain the rationale behind your questions/hypotheses and explain why the method you have selected is appropriate for this study. Prepare a methodology section as it would appear in a journal article or similar scholarly publication.

17) Describe ethnography, interviewing, focus groups, and field research to someone who is unfamiliar with all of them. How would one go about conducting these?

18) Talk about how qualitative research is used in advertising and marketing. Pay particular attention to the use of projective techniques.

19) Defend the value of qualitative research. Some researchers argue that quantitative research methods are superior to qualitative methods. How would you respond? Describe different qualitative research methods. Compare and contrast the advantages and limitations of these methods. Discuss different circumstances that might make certain methods more appropriate than others.

20) Design a study to evaluate gender issues related to television journalism. Briefly discuss the rationale for your study, and then explain your methodology as you would for an academic journal article.

21) Compare and contrast the advantages and limitations of different research methods. Discuss different circumstances that might make certain methods more appropriate than others. Compare and contrast measures, data analysis, time and cost factors, and conclusions that can be drawn. Be sure to discuss quantitative versus qualitative methods, measure reliability and validity, and threats to internal and external validity.

22) For your research on the history of advertising to women, you use archival data, anecdotal information and artifacts from past campaigns. Explain how you will analyze this data and how it may be incorporated into an historical study.

23) Choose one of the following study topics and briefly discuss the rationale for your study and the appropriateness of the method you select, and then explain your methodology as you would for an academic journal article.:

- a. The depiction of women and minorities in the popular magazines
- b. The impact of violence on television
- c. Comparing the impact of an emotional versus an informational appeal in an advertising campaign for a new car.
- d. Examine the ritual of group television viewing among women-focus on a specific program.

24) How do you define “empirical research”? How is observation defined in empirical research? What is the role of theory in empirical research?

25) Select one of the following methodologies: content analysis, social role analysis, depth interviews, rhetorical analysis, focus groups, survey interviews, or experimental research. Define the methodology you selected and advantages and disadvantages of using that methodology.

26) Ecology has been offered as a useful metaphor and model to explain development in media industries. Sociology has also picked up on this idea (e.g., Michael Hannan’s work) and developed an area we might label as population ecology of organizations. How useful are these ecological ideas from the natural sciences in explaining contemporary developments in media, particularly with regard to niche magazines?

27) In his essays “The median isn’t the message” and “Entropic Homogeneity ...” Stephen Jay Gould (1991, 1986) extols the virtues of spread over center. Describe his arguments such that you show a grasp of the perspective he is arguing for.

28) In quantitative research we typically evaluate whether chance has played a role in our obtained difference via null hypothesis testing or by estimation. Critically describe and discuss these two approaches such that you demonstrate an understanding of these two approaches, what they do and what their limitations are.

Professional or General Focus Questions

Each of the questions below is coded in red with a key word. Focus on those questions that are appropriate for your study plan according to these key word designations:

public relations, journalism advertising, entertainment, IMC, crisis communication, nonprofit organizations, global communication, organizational communication, fans, audiences, Internet, brands (communication, management, equity), and new media.

- 1) What do you consider to be the single most important theory of **public relations**?
A) Provide a brief description of the theory, and name the theorist who is credited with developing it. B) Provide your thoughtful and well-supported rationale for why you consider it to be important to the field of public relations. C) Provide a brief description and example of how this theory might help practitioners.
Be sure to justify your responses and cite your readings.

- 2) Describe Grunig & Hunt's four evolutionary models of **public relations**. A) Are all four models reflected in the practice of public relations today? Support your answer (e.g., which are, which aren't, and why). B) Provide a brief example of each model. C) Which model does Grunig propose to be the most appropriate for excellence in the field and why? Be sure to justify your responses and cite your readings.

- 3) The past year (2003) was one of the most miserable years in the history of modern American **journalism**. Jayson Blair served as a poster child for plagiarism, but other journalists succumbed to accusations of making up stories. What three reforms would you recommend that American journalism do now to restore its credibility?

- 4) The recent report, State of the News Media 2004, indicates that American **journalism** over the last year saw growth in three sectors: online, ethnic, and alternative. Broadcast and print media saw their numbers decline. If you were a newspaper or network executive, what executive strategies would you use to get your audience to return? How do you explain the growth in the three sectors and what does such growth say about issues of access, diversity, and ownership in media?

- 5) Based on your knowledge about the major theories and models that apply to **public relations**, how can these same principles be applied to crisis communications? Include examples to support your ideas.

- 6) Discuss the impact of the "**new media**" on the "traditional media" and the implications for management education in communication.

- 7) Technology has become an important part of public relations practice. How can the Internet be used to facilitate the flow of information during a crisis? What are some of the Internet's characteristics that make it ideal as a **public relations** tool in a crisis situation?

- 8) Discuss the variety of challenges that are faced by the new communication managers in connection with the rise of the **new media**. What are the implications for the future of the mass media?
- 9) A variety of scholars have developed theories about the nature of a crisis and how it should be handled from a public relations perspective. Explain the underlying principles of crisis communications, as conceived by some of these authors, and explain how these principles can be applied to help an organization prepare a **PR crisis plan**.
- 10) In the last year, Martha Stewart and her company have come under fire because of Stewart's recent criminal conviction. Based on what you know about **crisis communications**, what should the company do to recover from this crisis? What are some of the essential factors the company needs to consider if it expects to emerge from this crisis in good standing with its various publics? Draw on examples from the books and articles you've read to support your recommendations.
- 11) Describe two current **advertising** campaigns using print (newspapers and magazines) and screen (television, motion pictures, and the Web) media where one respects the intelligence of potential consumers by offering truthful and balanced messages and the other uses cynicism and fear. How should products be advertised in the crowded media environment of today?
- 12) Australian educator Gunther Kress asserts that advertising simply mirrors the society in which it operates. Every culture, he writes, has the kind of advertising it deserves. How did Presidential campaign television **advertisements** from the two major parties and outside interests reflect Kress' point? Did American culture get what it deserved?
- 13) Current **public relations** theories suggest that reputation management is crucial to the long-term success of an organization. How does a company establish a good reputation with its various publics? Explain the principles that guide these theories and discuss some of the strategies and tactics an organization can use to establish a positive image with the public.
- 14) In the last few years, we have seen many examples of organizations whose reputations have been damaged by scandal or crisis. Communication can often be a key element in the outcome of this kind of situation. Explain what a company can do through its **public relations** and communication activities to restore its image once it has been damaged. Also discuss other activities that can be used to reach out to the public as a means of repairing a company's damaged reputation.
- 15) Many **advertising** practitioners believe that brand equity is the most important consideration for a product. Unfortunately there are a number of other variables that influence the overall brand image besides advertising. Discuss the other "variables" that impact a company's equity. Give examples from the reading list to illustrate what these

variables are and how they might impact a specific brand. Feel free to use any examples from your list. How can a company have a bad brand equity? Give me a current example in your answer.

16) Is advertising good or bad? Support your answer with the readings as well as your own observations and the examples that have been presented to you in class.

17) Political campaigns today make use of all the elements of **IMC**. Explain these elements and how they may contribute to a successful presidential campaign.

18) Based on your understanding of media richness theory, how can the Internet be used to engage younger voters in the political campaign process? Explain the aspects of this new medium that are likely to appeal to this target public from a **public relations** perspective.

19) Fans have been studied from a variety of perspectives as they relate to sports, music, film, television and celebrities. Using Star Wars as an example, discuss the relationship between **fans** and branding, promotion, production and consumption.

20) The four models of **public relations** outlined by James Grunig and Todd Hunt are considered the foundation of public relations theory. As business becomes more global, researchers have leaned toward the development of international models of public relations. Drawing on your knowledge of international public relations issues, explain how the basic principles of Grunig theory can be applied on an international level.

21) As more and more companies expand their global operations, culture becomes a crucial factor in organizations. A large body of literature exists on intercultural communication and its relationship to organizations. What is the connection between intercultural communication and **public relations**? How can some of the intercultural communication theories be applied to organizations to promote successful public relations practices?

22) In a tight economy, the resources available to **nonprofit organizations** have been greatly reduced, forcing nonprofits to look beyond traditional sources for funding opportunities. Some nonprofit organizations have found it worthwhile to partner with for-profit companies in cause-related marketing activities, and to implement other practices that have traditionally been used by for-profit organizations. Discuss the process of cause-related marketing and explain how it and other types of for-profit activities can be applied to the successful management of nonprofit organizations.

23) The study of media audiences has evolved from studying passive to active to diffused audiences. Discuss how new media, new audiences and new research methods drive our current understanding of **audiences**.

24) A corporate downsizing or other type of organizational change can have a severe impact on employee morale and productivity. A major change such as a merger can also

affect an organization's culture, which can have a lasting effect on the future of the company. Drawing on what you know about the aftermath of change, address the following questions: What are the short- and long-term effects that organizational change can have on employees? How much does corporate culture factor into an organization's activities, and how can change affect a company's culture? What kinds of communication and **public relations** practices can be used to help restore equilibrium to an organization and help create a new corporate culture following a major organizational change?

25) In the last decade the field of employee communications has expanded as more channels of communication have become available as a way of reaching employees. Now that professional communicators have these options, what is the value that they can bring to **organizational communication**? What are some of the differences between formal and informal channels of internal communication that can be used to reach employees?

26) Traditional **public relations** textbooks talk about public relations as a “management function,” a routine part of an organization’s long-range planning. In an ideal world, how should public relations fit into corporate strategy? What can public relations practitioners do to align communication strategy with business strategy?

27) Discuss whether you believe **journalism** can ever be objective. Give examples of what Goldberg and Alterman think is bias. Are the media more conservative than liberal or more liberal than conservative? Who are the media elites and what are their political views, according to Goldberg, and what does Alterman say about them? What does Alterman mean by punditocracy? What issues are Alterman and Goldberg in agreement? Where do they most disagree? Who presents the stronger case? Examine the rhetorical style of the authors. Do they each present well-reasoned ethical arguments? Do they each resort to hype and personal attacks? Should they resort to personal attacks? Is that ethical?

28) Discuss current trends in **journalism** and explain whether they are in the public interest or not. Give examples from Stevens, McDougal, Dideon, McChesney and Brody and Picard. Given the state of celebrity journalism and pack coverage of political campaigns, are journalists fulfilling their role in society? Would Lippmann be pleased? Explain why or why not?

29) **Internet Advertising** Campaign - Pick a brand that markets products or services to Tweens (20-something and teens; you may redefine your target to include any age groups, e.g., 18-29, in the range of 13 and 29). You want to advertise/promote the brand on the Internet. Suppose your budget is \$2 million (or you may set the budget for the brand). A) Write and justify one or two most relevant goals for the brand. B) Recommend and justify at least two Internet-based advertising models. C) Discuss how you will develop and select the best set of ads in each model (You may discuss one or more of the metrics discussed in lecture that you think would best work in this situation) and justify what you do. D) Discuss what media (sites) would you use and the criteria by which you would evaluate the vehicles (e.g. sites)

30) Cross-Cultural **Advertising** - Discuss A) the issue of standardization and localization in advertising, B) any theoretical perspectives for the issue, C) any supporting evidence for each strategy based on the research studies listed in the reading list, D) practical and theoretical implications of the findings, and E) any limitations or contributions from the studies reviewed.

31) What is the process of **public relations** evaluation?

32) In the book Strategic **Brand Communication** Campaigns by Schultz the author takes great strides to present a model of consumer behavior that focuses on the relationship between brand and audience. Specifically the author stresses building the brand from the customer's viewpoint by trying to learn and understand what customers want or need to know about the brand and then providing it. How does this perspective compare to each of the following: a. Bogart's discussion on persuasion, b. Petty and Cacioppo's central versus peripheral routes to persuasion, c. Norris's discussion of selling trademarks and brand names, and d. Eighmey's work on consumer response to commercial websites.

33) In the book, **Advertising** in Contemporary Society, the authors present some interesting perspectives on the impact advertising has on society. Choose the perspective that is closest to your own opinion and present an argument for that perspective. Be sure to use current and real advertising examples in your answer. Also be sure to cite appropriate comments from the essays in the text or any other facts/data that serve to support your view.

34) **Brand-equity** is considered by many 'marketing types' to be the most important resource of the company. Discuss the reasons behind that assertion. Be sure your discussion addresses the following topics -- the difference between traditional marketing models and models that focus on branding such as the IBC model, the role of loyalty in the process, the role of non-advertising communication (publicity, etc) and evaluation of the branding campaign.

35) A) **Advertising** has been labeled as a process, often necessary for the development of our American capitalistic system. Make an argument for and against advertising based on the "pros" and "cons" of advertising as emulated by advertising authorities. Be sure to credit the source of your arguments in each case. B) Given that in the public mind advertising generally possesses a negative connotation, how you would recommend advertisers attempt to reposition the product – advertising itself to the American public?

36) A) Discuss the connection between **advertising** objectives and subsequent media objectives. In other words show how the former influences the later. You may use specific examples of real products to illustrate the point. B) Do the same thing with advertising objectives and creative strategy. In other words how does the advertising objective(s) impact the formation of creative strategy? Again give examples that illustrate your point.

37) Given what you know and have read about **advertising** media placement and proper frequency levels, address the John Paul Jones and Michael Napes notion of effective frequency. Be sure to include any mediating aspects such as brand reputation, national versus international campaigns, method of determining campaign success, etc. in your discussion.

38) A) Define and discuss the concept of **brand management** and brand value. B) When considering the notion of brand value; what might an established brand do to correct a slumping market share? Support your strategy with specific examples. If you wish you may use “real-life” cases in your answer pointing out the various “good” and “bad” applications of these companies.

39) You are the **public relations** director for the CSUF athletic department. Describe how social learning (now social cognitive theory) might be used to develop an integrated marketing communications campaign to increase attendance at games and to increase concession sales during the games.

40) Select an organization that recently experienced a crisis or **public relations**/marketing campaign. Use theories of persuasion (attitude formation and change) to explain the events and public relations efforts that took place as well as different publics' reactions to these events and efforts.

41) Pick examples of today's music and explain the ways you think they shape or reflect certain subcultures or society at large. What is your favorite type of music? Your favorite radio station? What appeals to you about this music/radio station? Do you think the music and radio programming you like shapes or reflects your own identity and subculture? Explain and justify with relevant theories and research as it applies to the **entertainment** field.

42) What does it mean to take a rhetorical approach to **public relations** theory and research? Argue for (and/or against) the value/appropriateness of a rhetorical approach (including a discussion of specific rhetorical theories that you know) for public relations.

43) Discuss the meaning of "celebrity." How are celebrities formed and what role do they play in our society? Discuss relevant theory and research. (**entertainment**)

44) Define cultural imperialism. How has Western culture dominated the flow of information? What type of disruptive influence can the exposure of Western values have on traditional societies? Give examples. (**global communication**)

45) How does the emergence of transnational media conglomerates affect the production of media content? Give examples. (**global communication**)

- 46) Botswana's diamond production has catapulted it into a middle-income nation with a very stable economy. However, Botswana has become a victim of its own economic success. Foreign investment has led to better transport links which, in turn, have aided the spread of HIV-AIDS. It has today the highest number of AIDS cases in Africa followed closely by Swaziland. The average life expectancy for males is 39 years. You have been hired by the Botswanan president, Festus Mogae, to increase AIDS testing. The United States, the Bill Gates Foundation, and other donors have teamed up to provide the country with anti-retroviral drugs. They are offered free of charge to any person who tests positive. The problem is that AIDS testing remains taboo in Botswana. What communications policy or program (based on theory) would you recommend to assist the president in his desire to get his countrymen tested? (**global communication**)
- 47) **Global telecommunications** changed more radically in the past 30 years than it had over the previous century, according to Joseph N. Pelton. Discuss these key changes in global telecommunications and the trends expected with the spread of broadband services and applications.
- 48) Promotion for a destination combines theory from advertising, public relations and marketing. Using an **IMC** approach, discuss how you can use theory to promote Hong Kong as a travel destination to an American tourist segment.
- 49) **Tourism** is the world's largest industry. Discuss how the notion of leisure time and play theory have contributed to this industry's growth and development. What major trends are predicted for global tourism?
- 50) Discuss **entertainment branding** as adapted for one of the following a) celebrities b) sports c) attractions d) films and e) cities. What principles from communications and marketing can be incorporated in a branding strategy?