Not Just Doers of the Word: An Updated Look at Roles Religion Communicators Play

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Abstract

This paper brings together findings from five different role-enactment surveys. The data combination gives a sharper picture of what religion communicators do and how their roles compare to secular practitioners. Religion communicators see themselves primarily as *technicians*. That role was most prominent in a 2006 survey of Religion Communicators Council (RCC) members. Nevertheless, results from 2011 and 2016 surveys of RCC members showed that *expert-prescriber,* a manager category on the Broom (1982) scale, was their most prominent role. *Manager* on the Dozier (1992) scale had the highest overall mean as well in the 2016 RCC survey. Religion communicators who do not belong to RCC worked more clearly as *technicians* in a 2013 survey than did RCC members in 2011 or 2016. But RCC members and nonmembers both did manager tasks significantly less than Public Relations Society of America members and nonmembers in another 2013 survey.

Introduction

Practitioner roles have been one of the most studied areas in public relations scholarship (Dozier & Broom, 2006; Pasadeos, Renfro, & Hanily, 1999; Porter & Sallot, 2003). Religion communication is one of the oldest areas of public relations specialization (Broom & Sha, 2013). Nevertheless, very few scholars have examined roles that religion communicators enact. This study adds to the limited data on what religion communicators do. It (a) follows up 2006 and 2011 surveys of Religion Communicators Council (RCC) members (Cannon, 2009, 2014) after another five years, (b) provides additional information on religion communicators who do not belong to the professional association, and (c) compares roles reports from religion communicators to secular practitioners, including members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

Review of Literature

Broom and Smith (1979) launched research into public relations roles. Broom and Smith developed four conceptual models of practice: *expert prescriber*, *communication process facilitator*, *problem-solving facilitator,* and *technician*. Broom and Smith did an experiment to test client satisfaction with public relations counselors enacting each role.

About the same time, Ferguson (1979) identified four major and six minor roles. Those came from a factor analysis of nationwide survey results from PRSA members. The major roles—*problem-solving manager*, *journalist-technical communicator*, *researcher*, and *staff manager*—paralleled Broom and Smith's conceptual categories in many respects.

Broom (1982) continued working on the Broom-Smith categories. He developed seven questionnaire items to measure each of the four approaches to public relations practice. Broom included those items in a 1979 survey of 815 PRSA members. Six items constituted the measurement scale for each role. A seventh asked respondents to describe how well they fit a description of each role. The scales all proved reliable. The four roles showed predictive validity in distinguishing practitioners on other variables. But high inter-item correlations among survey responses for *expert prescriber*, *communication process facilitator,* and *problem-solving facilitator* suggested that those three roles were not empirically distinct. Broom offered an umbrella label for those roles: *public relations manager*.

Dozier (1983, 1984) supported Broom's two-role finding after reanalyzing the 1979 survey data and results from two San Diego-area surveys. Using a grounded theoretical approach, Dozier determined that *public relations managers* carried out the tasks of the *expert prescriber* and *problem-solving facilitator*. *Public relations technicians* did what Broom (1982) described for that role. The two major roles were not correlated. Dozier identified two minor roles: *media-relations specialist* and *communication liaison* (later called *senior adviser*). *Media-relations specialists* were technicians who specialized in work with outside journalists rather than internal communication. *Communication liaisons*, a subcategory of managers, were senior advisers to decision-makers but not decision-makers themselves. These two minor roles often did not hold up in later factor analysis. Dozier (1984) concluded that *manager* and *technician* were the most parsimonious way to look at public relations roles. Nevertheless, he and Broom continued to maintain that the original four-part typology provided useful tools for dissecting the manager function (Dozier, 1984; Dozier & Broom, 2006).

Using his reanalysis of 1979 data, Dozier (1983, 1984, 1992; Broom & Dozier, 1993) tried to refine Broom's categories. Dozier developed a 16-item scale to measure four roles: *manager*, *senior adviser*, *media-relations specialist*, and *technician*. Many of the task descriptions mirrored Broom's. Subsequent studies that used these measures had trouble identifying four statistically distinct roles (Anderson, Reagan, Sumner, & Hill, 1989; Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986, 1995; Dozier, 1983, 1984, 1992; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Reagan, Anderson, Sumner, & Hill, 1990). Dozier and Broom (1995) returned to the two overarching roles: *public relations manager* and *technician*. The manager category included the three non-technician roles that Broom and Smith (1979) had named.

Survey research in Washington State (Anderson, Reagan, Sumner, & Hill, 1989; Reagan, Anderson, Sumner, & Hill, 1990) identified only two roles as well. The findings suggested that differentiating among the manger roles did not make empirical sense.

Nevertheless, Ekachai (1995) showed that Broom's roles scales had a cross-cultural application. Ekachai used the scales in a survey of 127 Thai public relations practitioners. *Manager* and *communication liaison* (senior adviser) were consistent with findings by Broom and Dozier (Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986, 1995; Broom & Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1984, 1992). Thai practitioners split the technician role, however, into two factors: *media-relations specialist* and *graphics technician*. The split appeared to reflect Thai practice.

Broom and Dozier (1986) resurveyed PRSA respondents from the 1979 sample. The goal was to see what, if anything, had changed. The study used Broom's 28-item roles scale and considered both the Broom (1982) and Dozier (1984) roles typologies. The new survey found that many technicians had moved into manager roles.

Dozier and Broom's (1995) survey of PRSA members in 1991 used 24 of Broom's

(1982) 28 items for measuring roles. The goal was to compare public relations manager role enactment to results from 1979 and determine if role measures remained consistent over time. Results confirmed the measures and the manager-technician typology.

Factor analysis of the 1979 and 1991 data gave continued evidence of a *senior adviser* management subcategory (what Dozier had originally called *communication liaison*) and a *media-relations specialist* subcategory of technician. The *senior adviser* role overlapped the manager role on several activity measures. *Senior advisers* appeared to be informal managers without formal policymaking power. The *media-relations specialist* role was unstable. It appeared in the 1979 data but not the 1991 results (Dozier & Broom, 1995).

Public relations scholars continued trying to refine role measurement scales. A May 1995 nationwide survey of PRSA members sought to determine whether relationships within the manager and technician roles had changed since 1990 (Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998). The 1,027 respondents rated themselves on a 17-item list of activities. Results identified three roles: *technician*, *manager*, and *agency*. The third role seem tied to the *expert prescriber*. Scale items continued to cross load in factor analyses. Researchers concluded that the overlap indicated that practitioners did a variety of activities.

Excellence studies (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002) used Dozier's four roles categories and a four-item scale to measure each one. Scale items were drawn primarily from the original seven used since Broom (1982). More recent studies have used an abbreviated roles scale based on Dozier's work. That scale uses five items to measure manager activities and five to gauge technician work (Sweetser & Sha, 2015; Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, & McCorkindale, 2013).

Guth (1995) developed a different scale to measure manager and technician roles in crisis-communication preparation. He used 20 items to identify practitioners working as managers and 10 items to identify technicians. Later research did not continue this approach.

Wright (1995) conceptualized a third major role, *communication executive*, after exploratory research with members of the Public Relations Seminar and Arthur W. Page Society. The 148 participants were mostly senior vice presidents of corporate communication who reported directly to the organizational chief executive. Wright reported their impressions of public relations practice but did not develop a survey scale to measure this third role.

Berkowitz and Hristodoulakis (1999) identified manager and technician roles in another way. The researchers used a 13-item instrument to survey 90 respondents (both public relations students and practitioners) about what public relations practitioners should do. A factor analysis of responses reflected a manager and a technician orientation. The survey population agreed on the purpose of public relations but differed on how to achieve it. Public relations education was associated with the manager orientation. Work experience was not associated with either orientation.

Liechty and Springston (1996) took roles research in a new direction. They said Broom and Dozier's manager-technician dichotomy lacked a coherent theoretical justification for the management factor. Drawing from boundary-spanning literature in organizational studies, Liechty and Springston developed an additional 14-item scale to refine the manager role into four distinct subfactors: *gatekeeping, advocacy, PR training*, and *collecting information*. In survey responses from Alabama practitioners, these new activities positively correlated with the items in the Broom scale for *expert prescriber*, *problem-solving facilitator,* and *communication-process facilitator*. Through further factor analysis Liechty and Springston identified four qualitatively different public relations roles: *internal communication specialists, generalists,*

traditional managers, and *external communication specialists*. Producing public relations materials (the major activity of Broom's *technician*) was a major activity for all but the traditional managers. Liechty and Springston concluded that the manager-technician dichotomy was not a rich enough description of what public relations practitioners did.

Porter and Sallot (2003) tried to replicate and refine Liechty and Springston's (1996) findings in a nationwide survey of PRSA members. The research concerned Worldwide Web use. A factor analysis of survey responses identified four slightly different roles from Liechty and Springston's: *internals, managers, externals*, and *technicians*. Technicians used the Web differently from the other three groups. Porter and Sallot concluded that despite slight differences in roles categories from Liechty and Springston, a four-factor typology for role classification was more enlightening than the manager-technician dichotomy.

Porter, Sweetser, and Chung (2009) tried to replicate and extend Porter and Sallot's 2003 work in an examination of blog use by public relations practitioners. Data analysis supported continued use of the manager-technician dichotomy, however. Poter et al. (2009) found no difference in blog use among managers and technicians.

Baker (2002) discussed three roles: *expert, service provider,* and *professional. Experts* claimed special expertise and sometimes focused more on exercising their power in the counselor-client interaction than on working for the client's benefit. *Service providers* sold their advice and creativity to clients much like tradesmen. Clients determined the public relations agenda and scope of work. The *service-provider* approach assumed that clients had no role in the relationship besides ordering a product and paying the fee. Both the *expert* and *service-provider* approaches overlooked the client's responsibility to do what was necessary to promote his or her benefit. *Professionals* illustrated Baker's covenant model. Practitioners and clients had relationships built on trust. *Professionals* proactively worked for clients' benefit (but did not hurt the interests of anyone else in the process), developed strategies to reach that good end, and presented options for reaching the goal. Clients, in turn, agreed to pick an option and do what was necessary to realize the benefit the option would generate.

Hazleton (2006) added competence to the technician-manager role calculation. He showed that organizational context and individual knowledge, skill, and motivation—among other variables—were related to competent role performance and role identification. *Technicians* enjoyed message-production tasks—both graphic and semantic—and judged messages independent of their content. *Managers* enjoyed organizational tasks, were motivated by ethical considerations, were more likely to see public relations as a social-science-based profession, and thought belonging to a professional organization was important.

European scholars identified a five-factor role-enactment model: *key policy strategy adviser, monitor and evaluator, issue management expert, trouble shooter/problem solver*, and *communications technician*. This model was based on results from a survey of public relations practitioners in the United Kingdom (DeSanto, Moss, & Newman, 2007). DeSanto et al. replicated an earlier British study in the United States to compare results. The American researchers surveyed PRSA members and found significant differences from the British study in strength and dimensions of the five roles. The U.S. study revealed three management factors (*key policy advice and strategy counsel, monitoring and evaluation*, and *issue management*) and a *technician* role. DeSanto et al. decided their results supported a multidimensional description of the manager role and offered a more effective positive and nominative approach than Broom's or Dozier's to describing what public relations practitioners and departments did.

German scholars used an exploratory cluster analysis of responses from 1,410 communicators in 30 European countries to explore practitioner roles (Beurer-Zullig, Fiesler, & Meckel, 2009). The analysis identified five typologies: *negotiators*, *brand officers*, *policy advisers*, *internal communicators*, and *press agents*. Vieira and Grantham (2014) found similar results among 256 PRSA members in the United States. The U.S. authors used different survey items to expand upon the German findings. A factor analysis of U.S. survey responses identified the same five roles. The European and U.S. studies differed on classification of manager and technician roles. In the U.S. study, *brand officers*, *internal communicators*, and *press agents* were more technical roles. *Negotiators* and *policy advisers* were more managerial. Americans appeared to mix manager and technician duties more than their European counterparts (Vieira & Grantham, 2014).

Sweetser and Sha (2015) identified a third major role in addition to manager and technician: *social media synapse*. Sweetser and Sha used the five-item Dozier scale to gauge role enactment by 355 candidates who had taken the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations in 2012. The survey instrument included two additional items developed by Sha and Dozier (2012) about social media activity. A factor analysis of responses by Accreditation candidates found that using social networks was a unique role. Public relations practitioners were connecting organizations to the communication environment in ways that others in the organization were not. Communicators used social networks to learn what was happening outside the organization that might affect the organization and to disseminate messages.

Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) used the five-item Dozier scale to explore differences in role enactment by PRSA members and nonmembers. Preliminary results showed essentially no difference in role enactment by the two groups.

Three studies have looked specifically at what religion communicators do. Givens-Carroll and Shin (2005) interviewed seven religion communicators. The discussions showed these practitioners were evolving toward managers as described in Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002). When dealing with conflicts, however, these religion communicators were hesitant to make the autonomous decisions expected of managers. These seven communicators were particularly concerned about how bad publicity could affect their organizations. That concern affected how the seven approached conflicts (Givens-Carroll & Shin, 2005).

A 2006 survey of RCC members used both the Broom and Dozier scales. Results showed that RCC members worked primarily as technicians, not managers. Furthermore, religion communicators appeared to be a distinct subset of practitioners. RCC members generally did not belong to secular professional organizations, such as PRSA, or read public relations trade publications. Nearly a quarter reported no formal education in communication disciplines (Cannon, 2009).

RCC respondents in 2006 said they thought their supervisors wanted them to concentrate on technical communication tasks. A follow-up survey in 2008 of faith group leaders showed they wanted communicators to work as managers more than technicians. Specifically, faith group leaders were looking for *expert prescribers* and *problem-solving facilitators* (Cannon, 2009).

A 2011 follow-up survey of role enactment by RCC members and a 2013 survey of religion communicators who did not belong to RCC yielded mixed results. Respondents from both groups again said they most often did technician tasks and seldom or only sometimes did manager tasks. But overall means among RCC members for *expert-prescriber* measures on the Broom scale and *manager* measures on the Dozier scale were higher than *technician* measures

on either scale (Cannon, 2014).

While social media questions were not in the 2006 survey of RCC members, work with social networks became a top task among religion communicators in 2011 and 2013. Producing web content moved from near the bottom of the task list in 2006 to near the top in 2011 and 2013 (Cannon, 2014).

Over the past 25 years scholars have repeatedly sought ways to enhance measurement of what public relations managers do. Although many have tried, no approaches have permanently moved the body of knowledge beyond the manager-technician dichotomy. The two-role approach—as almost everyone, including Broom and Dozier, have acknowledged—cannot detect fine details in roles performance. Nevertheless, as Dozier (1984) concluded, the manager and technician categories remain, at least for now, the most parsimonious way to describe public relations roles.

This study follows the long-established approach of Broom and Dozier. The goal is neither to test nor refine roles-enactment scales used in so many earlier studies. The aim is to add to the limited data in roles literature on what religion communicators do. To reach that goal, this study asks three research questions:

RQ1: How do roles performed by RCC members in 2016 compare to 2006 and 2011?

RQ2: How do roles performed by RCC members in 2011 and 2016 compare to non-member religion communicators in 2013?

RQ3: How do roles performed by religion communicators in 2011 and 2013 compare to roles reported by Darnowski, DiStaco, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) for PRSA members and nonmembers? Because few RCC members belong to PRSA (Cannon, 2009), the PRSA results can be assumed to represent secular practices and can provide a point of comparison for nearly contemporary survey results among religion practitioners.

Method

For RQ1, an online survey of RCC members collected responses from October through December 2016. That period was 10 years after the first survey of RCC members and five years after the follow-up survey (Cannon, 2009, 2014). The interfaith council, founded in November 1929 (Dugan, Nannes, & Stross, 1979), is the oldest professional public relations organization in the United States (Broom & Sha, 2013). RCC members work in public relations, advertising, news, and other communication activities. Members represent Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim organizations.

The 2016 questionnaire replicated items from 2006, 2011, and 2013 surveys of religion communicators (Cannon, 2009; 2014). Those items, in turn, replicated roles scales used by Broom (1982) and by Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002). The Broom scale comprises 28 items. The Dozier scale uses 16, but those include several measures from the Broom list. The 2006, 2011, 2013, and 2016 questionnaires included additional items about Internet and social-network duties. The number of tasks measured was 38 in 2006, 39 in 2011, and 40 in 2013 and 2016. Results from 2016 were compared item-by-item to results from 2006 and 2011 to identify similarities and differences.

For RQ2, survey responses from 2016 were compared to 2011 survey responses from RCC members and 2013 survey responses from religion communicators who did not belong to the council. These non-RCC members were all Christians and worked mostly in local Texas congregations or regional denominational offices in the southwestern United States.

For RQ3, responses from PRSA members reported by Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) were compared to similar responses from RCC members in 2011 and non-RCC members in 2013. Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale used an abbreviated 10-item scale. Comparisons were limited to those 10 items.

Results

Email invitations to complete the 2016 questionnaire went in mid-October to 500 people with email addresses in the RCC database as of October 1. Email survey reminders were sent in November and December. A November email newsletter to RCC members included an invitation and survey link as well. Responses came from 73 (15%) by December 31. That number was down substantially from 2011 ($n = 151$) and 2006 ($n = 185$).

Survey participants came from at least 19 of the 40 faith groups represented by RCC members in 2016. Sixty-six percent of RCC members listed a faith group in the membership database. Groups represented by at least 2 survey responses were (in order of response size) Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baha'i, United Church of Christ, Baptist, nondenominational Christian, Disciples of Christ, and Episcopalian. A review of the RCC directory showed that these 10 groups accounted for 84% of RCC members who listed faith groups in 2016. Two 2016 survey respondents did not specify a faith group.

Three-fifths of 2016 respondents (60%) were female. That percentage was lower than in 2011 (65%) or 2006 (69%). Mean age in 2016 was 53 (range 21-85), about the same as in 2011 (M=52, range 21-77) but up slightly from 2006 (M=49, range 23-92). Average communication experience in 2016 was 24.3 years (range 1-65), up from 23.5 years in 2011 (range 1-48) and 20 years in 2006 (range 1-50). Average experience in religion communication was 16.5 years in 2016 (range 0.5 to 65 years), up from 15.1 years in 2011 (range 1-41) and 10 years in 2006 (range 1-40).

About half of 2016 respondents (54%) said their title was director or vice president. That category was up from 2011 (43%) and the same as in 2006 (54%). Fifteen percent of 2016 respondents were managers or coordinators (up from 12% in 2011 and the same as in 2006). Twelve percent in 2016 were editors (the same as in 2011 and up from 5% in 2006). No 2016 respondents said they were specialists. That was a change from the previous two surveys. Eleven percent of 2011 respondents and 7% in 2006 were specialists.

Size of communication operations represented by RCC members ranged from no full-time staff members to 30. The mean was 4.6, up from 3 in 2011. The median was 2, down from 3 in 2011. The 2016 mode was 1 and 2. The 2011 mode was 1.

The 2016 group reported more graduate education than in 2011 or 2006 and the same level of formal communication training as in 2011—but more than in 2006. In 2016, 59% of respondents had graduate degrees (compared to 55% in 2011 and 47% in 2006). Eight-five percent of 2016 survey participants (the same as in 2011) said they had taken college-level courses in advertising, communication, journalism, or public relations. In 2006, only 77% had taken formal college classes in communication. Most respondents had earned at least bachelor's degrees (99% in 2016, 95% in 2011, 94% in 2006). Ninety-nine percent of respondents in all three groups had taken at least some college coursework (100% in 2016).

Table 1 shows that the focus of daily work for RCC members changed somewhat between and 2006 and 2016. The top-10 tasks were different for all three survey groups. In 2006 RCC members said writing materials on important issues was their most-performed duty

(*M*=3.79). In 2011 and 2013, producing content for web or email newsletters topped the lists (*M*=3.98 in 2011, *M*=3.97 in 2016). That web item ranked No. 30 of 38 tasks in 2006. Items about working with social media for the organization (added in 2011) ranked No. 14 of 39 tasks in 2011 (*M*=3.37). That item reached No. 4 of 40 tasks in 2016 (*M*=3.75).

TABLE 1

Top-10 Tasks Performed by RCC Members in 2016, 2011, and 2006

2016		2011		2006	
*Produce content or web	3.97	*Produce content or web	3.98	*Write materials	3.79
*Edit writing	3.89	Advocate systematic planning	3.62	*Edit writing	3.73
*Write materials	3.78	*Edit writing	3.61	*Inform others about coverage	3.71
*Work with social media	3.75	*Write materials	3.57	*Use journalist skills	3.69
Take responsibility of failure	3.75	*Produce publications	3.57	*Maintain media contacts	3.68
Involve mgt. in decision-making	3.74	Involve mgt. in decision-making	3.55	Represent org. at meetings	3.65
Considered comm. expert	3.65	Diagnose comm. problems	3.53	Advocate systematic planning	3.63
Held accountable for failure	3.55	Considered comm. expert	3.42	Take responsibility for failure	3.61
*Use journalist skills	3.54	Take responsibility for failure	3.41	Diagnose comm. problems	3.61
Plan courses of action	3.49	Only suggest policy	3.40	Involve mgt. in decision making	3.59

Note. * Technician tasks.

Five of the top-10 tasks in 2006 and 2016 were measures of manager activity. Six in 2011 were manager measures. Four of the manager tasks in 2016, three in 2011, and two in 2006 came from the *expert-prescriber* scale. One measure in 2016, two in 2011, and one in 2006 came from the *problem-solving-facilitator* scale. One 2011 manager task came from the *senior-adviser* scale. One 2006 task came from the *communication-process-facilitator* list.

RQ1: Comparing RCC members in 2006, 2011, and 2016

RQ1 asked how role enactment by RCC members in 2016 compared to findings from 2011 and 2006. Table 2 shows the answer on the 24-item Broom scale (Broom 1982). Table 3 shows the comparison on the 16-item Dozier scale (Dozier, 1992).

TABLE 2

Comparison of Means on Broom Scale for Role Enactment

Roles and measures	2006 *n*=115	2011 *n*=150	2016 *n*=73
Technician[a]			
I write materials presenting information on issues important to the organization.	3.79	3.57	3.77
I edit and/or rewrite for grammar and spelling the materials written by others in the organization.	3.73	3.61	3.89
I maintain media contacts for the organization.	3.68	3.07	3.33
I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications.	3.55	3.57	3.42
I handle technical aspects of producing communication materials.	3.10	3.01	3.22
I do photography and graphics for communication materials.	2.80	2.72	3.01
Overall means for technician role	*3.44*	*3.26*	*3.44*
Cronbach's alpha for technician role	.75	.69	.70
Manager: Expert prescriber[b]			
I diagnose communications problems and explain them to others in the organization.	3.61	3.53	3.36
I take responsibility for the success or failure of the organization's communication programs.	3.61	3.41	3.75
I plan and recommend courses of action for solving communication problems.	3.54	3.32	3.49

8

Because of my experience and training, others consider me to be the organization's expert in solving communication problems.	3.39	3.42	3.65
Others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of communication programs.	3.32	3.22	3.55
I make communication policy decisions.	3.08	3.09	3.41
Overall means for expert-prescriber role	***3.43***	***3.33***	***3.54***
Cronbach's alpha for expert prescriber	.90	.93	.91

Manager: Problem-solving facilitator[c]

In meetings with management, I point out the need to follow a systematic communications planning process.	3.63	3.62	3.41
I encourage management participation when making the important communication decisions.	3.59	3.55	3.74
When working with managers on communication, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems.	3.37	3.34	3.36
I keep management actively involved in every phase of the communication program.	3.15	2.99	3.12
I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding communication problems.	2.85	2.86	2.82
I operate as a catalyst in management's decision making.	2.81	2.93	2.97
Overall means for problem-solving facilitator role	***3.23***	***3.22***	***3.24***
Cronbach's alpha for problem-solving facilitator role	.86	.91	.87

Manager: Communication process facilitator[d]

I keep others in the organization informed of what the media report about our organization and important issues.	3.71	3.24	3.33
I represent the organization at events and meetings.	3.65	3.37	3.33
I keep management informed of public reaction to organizational policies, Procedures, and/or actions.	3.51	3.37	3.48
I create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics.	2.74	2.56	2.51
I report public opinion survey results to keep management informed of the opinions of various publics.	2.38	2.34	2.42
I conduct communication audits to identify communication problems between the organization and various publics.	1.96	1.98	1.96
Overall means for communication process facilitator role	***2.99***	***2.81***	***2.84***
Cronbach's alpha for communication process facilitator role	.78	.87	.85

Note. Responses were (1) Never do, (2) Seldom do, (3) Sometimes do, (4) Often do, (5) Always do.
[a] $r=.84$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.87$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.85$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2016. [b] $r=.87$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.18$, $p=NS$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.26$, $p=NS$ for 2006 and 2016. $F_{(2, 4)}=2.09$, $p=.158$. [c] $r=.97$, $p<.01$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.91$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.92$, $p<.001$ for 2006 and 2016. [d] $r=.99$, $p<.001$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.99$, $p<.001$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.98$, $p<.01$ for 2006 and 2016.

TABLE 3

Comparison of Means on Dozier Scale for Role Enactment

Roles and measures	2006 n=115	2011 n=150	2016 n=73
Media relations specialist[a]			
I keep others informed of media coverage.	3.71	3.24	3.33
I use my journalistic skills to find newsworthy material.	3.69	3.39	3.54
I maintain media contacts for my organization.	3.68	3.07	3.33
I am responsible for placing news releases.	3.36	3.06	3.14
Overall means for media relations specialist role	***3.68***	***3.19***	***3.34***
Cronbach's alpha	.85	.88	.88
Technician[b]			
I write communication materials.	3.79	3.58	3.77
I edit the writing of others for grammar and spelling.	3.73	3.61	3.89

I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other materials.	3.55	3.57	3.42
I do photos and graphics for communication materials.	2.80	2.72	3.01
Overall means for technician role	***3.47***	***3.37***	***3.52***
Cronbach's alpha	.61	.59	.62

Manager[c]

I take responsibility for communication program success/failure.	3.61	3.41	3.75
I'm considered the expert at solving communication problems.	3.39	3.42	3.65
Others hold me accountable for communication programs.	3.32	3.22	3.55
I make communication policy decisions.	3.08	3.09	3.41
Overall means for manager role	***3.35***	***3.29***	***3.59***
Cronbach's alpha	.84	.90	.92

Senior adviser[d]

I represent my organization at events and meetings.	3.65	3.37	3.33
I don't make communication policy but provide suggestions.	3.50	3.40	3.25
I am senior counsel to top decision makers.	3.09	3.07	3.27
I create opportunities for management to hear publics.	2.74	2.56	2.51
Overall means for senior adviser role	***3.25***	***3.10***	***3.09***
Cronbach's alpha	.50	.57	.57

Note. Responses were (1) Never do, (2) Seldom do, (3) Sometimes do, (4) Often do, (5) Always do.
[a] $r=.57$, p=NS for 2006 and 2011, $r=.87$, p=NS for 2011 and 2016, $r=.79$, p=NS for 2006 and 2016. $F(2,2)=6.85$, $p<.05$. [b]$r=.98$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.88$, p=NS for 2011 and 2016, $r=.94$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2016. $t=-0.52$, df=6, $p=.62$ for 2011 and 2016. [c]$r=.89$, p=NS for 2006 and 2011, $r=.95$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.99$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2016. $t=+.48$, df=6, $p=.65$ for 2006 and 2011. [d]$r=.96$, $p<.05$ for 2006 and 2011, $r=.93$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016, $r=.84$, p=NS for 2006 and 2016. $t=+0.55$, df=6, $p=.46$ for 2006 and 2016.

The Broom scale (Table 2) reflects a shift in role priorities for RCC members. *Expert-prescriber* measures, not those for *technician*, showed the highest overall means in 2011 (M=3.33) and 2016 (M=3.59). That category was almost tied with the overall mean for *technician* (M=3.44 for *technician*, M=3.43 for *expert prescriber*) in 2006, when *technician* was first.

Statistical tests of responses from each survey help interpret the priority changes. Measures for *technician*, *problem-solving facilitator*, and *communication-process facilitator* in 2006, 2011, and 2016 all intercorrelate at the .05-level of significance. That significance means that answer patterns for those roles were very similar and that the similarity was not by chance. The direction of those connections is consistent across all three surveys. The high level of the correlations indicates a strong effect size, according to Cohen (1988). But the three *expert-prescriber* measures show limited statistical connections. Only responses from 2006 and 2011 correlate at the .05-level of significance. A one-way analysis of variance shows no significant difference in the means for the 2006, 2011 and 2016 measures. Those results indicate that response patterns for *expert prescriber* were not the same in all three surveys but that the differences could be explained by chance.

The six items in each Broom scale appeared to reliably measure distinct approaches to public relations practice. Cronbach alphas for all scales but one were above the acceptable .70 standard (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barnett, 2013). The alpha for the 2011 technician scale was .69.

Results for the Dozier scales (Table 3) were not as reliable. Cronbach alphas for the *media relations specialist* and *manager* scales were above the .70 level, but those for *technician* and *senior adviser* were not. The low alphas for those two scales raised questions about whether they were reliably measuring distinct roles.

Role priorities were different on the Dozier scale in all three surveys. In 2006, *media relations*

specialist was the most prominent role (*M*=3.68). *Technician* was second (*M*=3.47), and *manager* was third (*M*=3.35). In 2011, the *technician* measure had the highest overall mean (*M*=3.37). *Manager* was second (3.29), and *media relations specialist* was third (*M*=3.19). In 2016, the *manager* role was first (*M*=3.59). *Technician* (*M*=3.52) was second, and *media relations specialist* was again third (*M*=3.34). The *senior adviser* role consistently came in last.

Despite the emergence of *manager* roles on both the Broom and Dozier scales in 2016, RCC members continued to describe themselves as *technicians*. Table 4 shows responses in 2006, 2011, and 2016 to Broom's question about which role is primary. Responses in the three survey groups intercorrelate at the .05-level of significance. That significance confirms that the answer pattern was the same across all three surveys. The high level of these correlations indicates a strong effect size, according to Cohen (1988). Furthermore, 57% of RCC respondents in 2016 said in another questionnaire item that the *technician* description best defined their primary role. Only 17% cited *expert prescriber*. Fourteen percent said *problem-solving facilitator*, and 12% picked *communication-process facilitator*.

TABLE 4

Comparison of Means for Primary Role Descriptions by RCC members in 2006, 2011, and 2016

Primary role statement	2006 n=115	2011[a] n=150	2016[b, c] n=73
I am a specialist in writing and producing communication materials.	3.92	3.76	3.78
I am the organization's expert on diagnosing and solving communication problems.	3.43	3.28	3.36
I am a liaison, promoting two-way communication between management and our various publics.	3.34	3.23	3.23
I am a problem-solving facilitator, helping management define problems, set objectives and plan programs systematically.	3.23	2.86	2.77

Note. [a] *r* = .96, *p*<.05 for 2006 and 2011. [b] *r* = .99, *p*<.001 for 2016 and 2011. [c] *r* = .92, *p*<.05 for 2016 and 2006.

RQ2: RCC members vs. nonmembers

RQ2 asked if RCC members in 2011 and 2016 approached their work differently from nonmember religion communicators in 2013. Table 5 compares survey responses on the Broom scale from RCC members in 2011 and 2016 to nonmembers in 2013. Table 6 shows the comparison on the Dozier scale for the same three surveys.

TABLE 5

Comparison of Means on Broom Scale for RCC Members and Nonmembers

Roles and measures	2011 *n*=150	2013 *n*=46	2016 *n*=73
Manager: Expert prescriber[a]			
I diagnose communications problems and explain them to others in the organization.	3.53	3.07	3.36
Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving comm. problems.	3.42	3.16	3.65
I take responsibility for the success or failure of the organization's communication programs.	3.41	3.37	3.75
I plan and recommend courses of action for solving communication problems.	3.32	2.93	3.49
Others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of communication programs.	3.22	3.24	3.55
I make communication policy decisions.	3.09	2.78	3.41
Overall means for expert-prescriber role	*3.33*	*3.09*	*3.54*
Cronbach's alpha for expert prescriber	.93	.92	.91

Technician[b]

I edit and/or rewrite for grammar and spelling the materials written by others in the organization.	3.61	3.87	3.89
I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications.	3.57	3.91	3.42
I write materials presenting information on issues important to the organization.	3.57	3.44	3.77
I maintain media contacts for the organization.	3.07	2.51	3.33
I handle technical aspects of producing communication materials.	3.01	3.41	3.22
I do photography and graphics for communication materials.	2.72	3.76	3.01
Overall means for technician role	*3.26*	*3.48*	*3.44*
Cronbach's alpha for technician role	.69	.77	.70

Manager: Problem-solving facilitator[c]

In meetings with management, I point out the need to follow a systematic communications planning process.	3.62	3.18	3.41
I encourage management participation when making the important communication decisions.	3.55	3.18	3.74
When working with managers on communication, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems.	3.34	3.13	3.36
I keep management actively involved in every phase of the communication program.	2.99	2.86	3.12
I operate as a catalyst in management's decision making.	2.93	2.53	2.97
I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding communication problems.	2.86	2.47	2.82
Overall means for problem-solving facilitator role	*3.22*	*2.89*	*3.24*
Cronbach's alpha for problem-solving facilitator role	.91	.91	.87

Manager: Communication process facilitator[d]

I keep management informed of public reaction to organizational policies, procedures, and/or actions.	3.37	2.84	3.48
I represent the organization at events and meetings.	3.37	2.80	3.33
I keep others in the organization informed of what the media report about our organization and important issues.	3.24	2.98	3.33
I create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics.	2.56	2.22	2.51
I report public opinion survey results to keep management informed of the opinions of various publics.	2.34	1.67	2.42
I conduct communication audits to identify communication problems between the organization and publics.	1.98	1.72	1.96
Overall means for communication process facilitator role	*2.81*	*2.31*	*2.84*
Cronbach's alpha for communication process facilitator role	.87	.83	.85

Note. Responses were (1) Never do, (2) Seldom do, (3) Sometimes do, (4) Often do, (5) Always do. [a] $F(2,4)=9.63$, $p<.01$. [b] $r=.90$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016. [c] $r=.93$, $p<.01$ for 2011 and 2013. $r=.92$, $p<.01$ for 2013 and 2016. $r=.91$, $p<.05$ for 2011 and 2016. [d] $r=.96$, $p<.01$ for 2011 and 2013. $r=.94$, $p<.01$ for 2013 and 2016. $r=.99$, $p<.001$ for 2011 and 2016.

TABLE 6

Comparison of Means on Dozier Scale for RCC members and nonmembers

Roles and measures	2011 $n=150$	2013 $n=46$	2016 $n=73$
Technician			
I edit the writing of others for grammar and spelling.	3.61	3.87	3.89
I write communication materials.	3.58	3.44	3.77
I produce brochures, pamphlets and other materials.	3.57	3.91	3.42
I do photos and graphics for communication materials.	2.72	3.76	3.01
Overall means for technician role	*3.37*	*3.75*	*3.52*
Cronbach's alpha	.59	.60	.62
Manager[a]			
I take responsibility for communication program success/failure.	3.41	3.37	3.75
I'm considered the expert at solving communication problems.	3.42	3.16	3.65
Others hold me accountable for communication programs.	3.22	3.24	3.55
I make communication policy decisions.	3.09	2.78	3.41
Overall means for manager role	*3.35*	*3.29*	*3.59*
Cronbach's alpha	.84	.90	.92

Media relations specialist[b]

I use my journalistic skills to find newsworthy material.	3.39	3.02	3.54
I keep others informed of media coverage.	3.24	2.98	3.33
I maintain media contacts for my organization.	3.07	2.51	3.33
I am responsible for placing news releases.	3.06	2.85	3.14
Overall means for media relations specialist role	*3.19*	*2.84*	*3.34*
Cronbach's alpha	.88	.88	.88

Senior adviser

I represent my organization at events and meetings.	3.37	2.80	3.33
I don't make communication policy but provide suggestions.	3.40	3.31	3.25
I am senior counsel to top decision makers.	3.07	2.64	3.27
I create opportunities for management to hear publics.	2.56	2.22	2.51
Overall means for senior adviser role	*3.10*	*2.74*	*3.09*
Cronbach's alpha	.57	.60	.57

Note. Responses were (1) Never do, (2) Seldom do, (3) Sometimes do, (4) Often do, (5) Always do. [a] $F(2,2)=5.77, p<.05.$ [b] $F(2,2)=7.4, p<.05.$

Results from these three surveys indicate that RCC members do approach public relations practice differently from non-RCC members. Overall means in Table 5 show that *expert prescriber* was the most prominent role for RCC members in 2011 (*M*=3.33) and 2016 (*M*=3.54). *Technician* was the most performed role among non-RCC members in 2013 (*M*=3.48). A one-way analysis of variance found that means for *expert-prescriber* measures across the three surveys were significantly different, $F(2,4)=9.63, p<.01$. Those differences were not the result of chance.

RCC responses for the *technician* measures in 2011 and 2016 correlated at the .05-level of significance. But RCC responses did not correlate with *technician* results from non-RCC members. Those results indicated that RCC responses for *technician* measures followed similar patterns and that those patterns were not the result of chance. The RCC pattern was different, however, from the *technician* responses from non-RCC members.

Responses from all three surveys for the *communication-process facilitator* and *problem-solving facilitator* scales intercorrelated at the .05-level of significance. All responses for those two roles followed similar patterns. Low overall means for those two scales indicate that neither RCC members nor nonmembers performed those roles very often.

Strong Cronbach alphas for all Broom scales in each survey provided evidence of internal response consistency for each role category. The items appeared to be measuring common role enactment.

As with results for RQ1, means on the Dozier scales (Table 6) showed inconsistent results across the three surveys. None of the four measures intercorrelated at the .05-level of significance. Similarities in response patterns could be the result of chance. A one-way analysis of variance showed that means for the *manager* and *media-relations specialist* measures in 2011, 2013 and 2016 were different at the .05-level of significance. RCC members appeared to perform those roles more often than non-RCC members. That difference was not the result of chance. But low Cronbach alphas for the *technician* and *senior adviser* continued to raise questions about the overall reliability of the Dozier scale.

RQ3: Comparison of religion and secular practitioners
RQ3 asked if religion and secular communicators carried out roles differently. Table 7

compares role measures on an abbreviated 10-item scale for RCC members in 2011 and PRSA members in 2013 (Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, & McCorkindale, 2013). Table 8 compares role enactment on the same 10-item scale by non-RCC members to non-PRSA members in 2013.

TABLE 7

Comparison of Means for Role Enactment by RCC in 2011 and PRSA members in 2013

Role and measures	RCC n=150	PRSA n=1,739
Technician*		
I write communication materials.	5.01	5.46
I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other materials.	5.00	5.21
I maintain media contacts for the organization.	4.30	5.55
I handle technical aspects of producing communication materials.	4.21	4.72
I do photos and graphics for communication materials.	3.81	3.95
Overall means for technician scale	*4.47*	*4.98*
Manager *		
I encourage management participation when making important communication decisions.	4.97	6.17
When working with managers on communication, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems.	4.79	5.51
I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding communication problems.	4.75	4.92
I keep management informed of public reaction to organizational policies, procedures, and/or actions.	4.72	5.87
Others hold me accountable for communication programs.	4.51	5.48
Overall means for manager scale	*4.75*	*5.59*

Note. PRSA results from Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013). Responses from RCC members were regularized from a 5- to a 7-point scale for comparison.
* r=.74, p=ns/t=-1.36, df=8, p=ns ** t=-3.78, df=8, p<.01

TABLE 8

Comparison of Means for Role Enactment by Non-RCC Religion Communicators and Non-PRSA Secular Communicators in 2013

Role and measures	Religion n=46	Secular n=421
Technician*		
I write communication materials.	4.82	5.32
I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other materials.	5.48	5.29
I maintain media contacts for the organization.	3.51	5.31
I handle technical aspects of producing communication materials.	4.77	4.92
I do photos and graphics for communication materials.	5.26	4.18
Overall means for technician scale	*4.77*	*5.00*
Manager *		
I encourage management participation when making important communication decisions.	4.45	6.04
I keep management informed of public reaction to organizational policies, procedures, and/or actions.	3.98	5.58
When working with managers on communication, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems.	4.38	5.55
Others hold me accountable for communication programs.	4.54	5.30
I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding communication problems.	3.46	4.92
Overall means for manager scale	*4.16*	*5.48*

Note. PRSA results from Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013). Responses from RCC members were regularized from a 5- to a 7-point scale for comparison.
* r=.83, p<.05 ** t=-3.78, df=8, p<.01

A *t*-test shows differences at the .05-level of significance between RCC and PRSA members on the *manager* scale in Table 7. RCC members do not appear to perform *manager* tasks as consistently as PRSA members. The *technician* scale reveals no significant relationships. Overall means for performance of *technician* tasks by PRSA are higher for all measures than for RCC members (4.98 vs. 4.77), but that difference may be the result of chance.

Among nonmembers of both organizations (Table 8), a slightly different pattern emerges. Secular practitioners continue to work as *managers* more consistently than religion communicators. A *t*-test shows means on the *manager* scale are significantly different. On the *technician* scale, however, responses correlate at the .05-level of significance. That result indicates similar response patterns for *technician* measures. Those similarities are not the result of chance.

Discussion

This paper brings together findings from five different role-enactment surveys. The data combination gives a sharper picture of what religion communicators do and how their roles compare to secular practitioners. The image that has developed is somewhat surprising. Religion communicators see themselves primarily—in the words of James 1:22—as "doers of the word." Nevertheless, 2011 and 2016 results reveal manager behaviors not clearly recognized in the first survey snapshot from 2006 (Cannon, 2009). In 2006 survey results, the overall mean for *expert-prescriber* measures on the Broom scale was essentially the same as the mean for *technician* measures (3.43 vs. 3.44). But RCC members clearly said that technician was their primary role. In fact, they said their supervisors expected them to be technical communication experts. The study, therefore, concluded that *technician* was their primary role.

Survey results from 2011 and 2016 showed, however, that RCC members were not just "doers of the word." *Expert-prescriber,* one category of manager on the Broom scale, was the most prominent role in both surveys. *Manager* on the Dozier scale had the highest overall mean in 2016. Furthermore, manager actions accounted for at least half the top-10 duties that RCC members performed in all three surveys. RCC members said others considered them communication experts who diagnosed communication problems and planned communication actions. RCC members were held accountable for the success or failure of communication efforts. These findings affirmed what Givens-Carroll and Shin (2005) discovered. Religion communicators were evolving toward managers.

But results from 2006, 2011, and 2016 show that RCC members do not practice the full range of manager tasks on the Broom (1982) scale. Earlier research showed that to be considered a manager, top communicators needed to demonstrate knowledge of research and strategic planning as well as technical communication skills (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Broom's scales listed research skills among measures for *communication-process facilitators*. Those tasks included doing or commissioning research, conducting communication audits, and reporting public opinion survey results to management. Participants in all three RCC surveys did not perform these tasks often. They ranked among the bottom-10 duties in in 2006, 2011, and 2016. The *communication-process-facilitator* role received the weakest support in all three surveys.

But advocating systematic communication planning, a measure of a *problem-solving facilitator*, was among the top-10 tasks in the 2011 and 2006 surveys.

Previous studies connected knowledge with management role enactment (Berkowitz & Hristodoulakis, 1999; Dozier, 1992; Dozier and Broom, 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Such knowledge came from formal education, reading trade publications, and participating in professional associations. This study did not analyze all these variables. But 85% of RCC respondents in 2011 and 2016 (compared to 77% in 2006) said they had taken college-level courses in advertising, communication, journalism, or public relations. Berkowitz and Hristodoulakis (1999) showed that formal public relations education was associated with manager role enactment. More religion communicators in 2011 and 2016 than in 2006 had such backgrounds. That change may be one factor in the increased manager role enactment.

Non-RCC members were more focused than RCC members on doing than on managing. The 2013 results were consistent with Hazleton (2006). He said managers would be more likely to join professional organizations. RCC and non-RCC responses on the *expert-prescriber* scale were significantly different. Non-RCC members did not perform this role as often as RCC members. Nonmembers had a higher overall technician mean in 2013 on the Broom scale than did RCC members in either 2011 or 2016. Comparisons of these measures showed no correlations between RCC and non-RCC results but significant correlations between both RCC survey responses. Therefore, the RCC responses were consistent with each other but not with non-RCC results. Nevertheless, statistical tests could not determine if this difference was simply a chance result.

Results on the Dozier scale were much less illuminating. Means for each role were inconsistent across all three surveys. Statistical tests between survey results were inconclusive. Weak Cronbach alphas raised questions about scale reliability.

Earlier studies looked at sex as a variable (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). This analysis did not. When women were the top communicators in the Excellence surveys, they were more likely than men to mix work as *managers* and *technicians* (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Women accounted for 69% of religion-communicator survey respondents in 2006, 65% in 2011, 74% in 2013, and 60% in 2016. Therefore, the sex of a respondent might be a factor in how religion communicators understood their roles. Men were a larger part of the population in surveys with higher overall means for manager roles. Future research should examine the sex variable.

Work environment might be another factor. A quarter of RCC respondents in 2006 and 2016 as well as a fifth in 2011 said they were the only communication person in their organization. In 2013 the range in staff size was 0-4, and the mode was 1. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) reported similar staff patterns among the 64 nonprofit organizations in the Excellence studies. Communication staffs were often one person. As a result, that person combined *manager* and *technician* roles. Future research among religion communicators should probe how staff size affects role enactment.

Comparisons of responses from religion communicators with survey results from Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) show that differences between the groups may be consistent with what Cannon (2009) reported for 2006. Both RCC members and nonmembers said they did *manager* tasks significantly less than both PRSA members and nonmembers. Therefore, religion communicators might still be a distinct subset of practitioners, but the focus on technical tasks might not be as sharp as 2006 results appeared to indicate. More

research that compares religion communication practices to secular work is needed to make the picture even clearer.

Expanding research among religion communicators may be a challenge, however. RCC had only about 500 names in its 2011 and 2016 databases. The total number of communicators working for faith groups across the United States is not known. Few denominational groups are organized formally like RCC. Therefore, compiling a larger, more comprehensive sample frame for future studies will be difficult. Nonetheless, results from this study indicate that non-RCC members may not approach their work the same way RCC members do.

This and previous studies of religion communicators suffer from small numbers. Surveys reached limited groups of religion communicators. Comparisons of results from two small samples to the much larger populations questioned by Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) raise statistical questions. For example, are responses for religion communicators normally distributed, and is variance equal in the two small datasets? Because of the limited faith groups included in the response frame and the type of practitioner who joins RCC, the answer is probably not. Nevertheless, consistency of survey-population demographics gives evidence of at least face validity for RCC results. These exploratory findings from 2006, 2011, and 2013 provide baselines for future inquiries.

Future studies might not look only at role enactment. Researchers might apply competence theory (Hazleton, 2006) to consider why religion communicators approach their work as they do. Cannon (2009) asked supervisors about what they expected from religion communicators. Expanding that inquiry could help explain the organizational environments in which religion communicators work.

As the communication environment continues to evolve, social networks may be introducing new roles for communicators to play (Sweetser & Sha, 2015). Limited responses from 2006, 2011, 2013, and 2016 offer mixed signals about how religion communicators are responding. Blogging and producing podcasts were two of the least-performed tasks by religion communicators in all four surveys. But preparing content for websites and email newsletters was the top activity in 2011, 2013, and 2016. Working with social media ranked 14th on the list of 39 measured activities in 2011, 11th of 40 in 2013, and fourth of 40 in 2016. Future research should examine if the *social media synapse* that Sweetser and Sha (2015) identified becomes evident among religion communicators.

Conclusion

Despite its clear limitations, this study adds to the limited data on religion communicators. Results from 2011, 2013, and 2016 help paint a richer picture of what roles religion communicators perform than the initial 2006 snapshot (Cannon, 2009) did. Comparisons to results from Darnowski, DiStaso, Sisco, and McCorkindale (2013) for both PRSA members and nonmembers help put role enactment by religion public relations practitioners into broader industrial context. Religion communicators may continue to be a distinct subset of practitioners, but differences do not appear to be as great as the 2006 study maintained (Cannon, 2009). Changes in the media environment—especially the emergence of social networks—may move religion public relations practices closer to the mainstream. In light of religion communication's long history as a public relations specialty, evolutions in this area of practice merit continued monitoring and analysis.

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