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Integrating Public Affairs Information Strategy With Organizational Practices in Healthcare Delivery Organizations

Brian S. Vamstad
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Brian Vamstad

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2017

Abstract

Integrating Public Affairs Information Strategy With Organizational Practices in

Healthcare Delivery Organizations

by

Brian S. Vamstad

MA, Northern Michigan University, 2010

BS, Northern Michigan University 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2017

Abstract

Public affairs professionals are responsible for monitoring the sociopolitical environment and using information strategies to respond to public policy proposals on behalf of firms and organizations. To develop, implement, and legitimize public policy, lawmakers and public administrators rely on the input from external experts and stakeholders. The purpose of this research was to explore how public affairs engage with healthcare intraorganizational stakeholders to leverage their knowledge for information strategies. Knowledge transfer served as a theoretical framework through a qualitative multiple case study of 3 healthcare delivery organizations in the upper Midwest of the United States. Primary data were collected using semistructured interviews from public affairs ($n = 11$) and healthcare professionals ($n = 18$). Organizational documents and public records were reviewed to understand the internal interaction of public affairs and the development of information strategies. Patterns and themes emerged through cross case synthesis, presented as a process-based model and theory. Public affairs functions were structured inconsistently in all case sites. Decision-making processes primarily involved nonpublic affairs stakeholders approving information products. Intraorganizational engagement and knowledge transfer was found as ad-hoc and consistent, through a blending of informal and formal methods. Practitioner strategies, tactics, and challenges were identified to facilitate internal interaction. This study provides insight to improving public affairs practice and supports linking the expertise of healthcare stakeholders to policymaking. Improving the healthcare delivery system through public policymaking is fostered through aligning policy with the knowledge of healthcare professional practice.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation in honor my grandmother, Ruth, for inspiring me to explore new endeavors, embrace challenges, and travel the world. In remembrance of my grandparents, I dedicate this study to Robert Berg for his never-ending kindness and devotedness; to Peggy Berg, for her love of cooking and strong will; and Oscar Vamstad for all the fun times spent fishing and support of all the activities I was involved in. I am thankful for all the memories that are cherished every day.

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I recognize my parents, Stuart and Patricia, for their guidance and support for me to push boundaries, take on challenges, and strive for excellence in life and pursuing higher education. Their unending support, love and understanding of the time and effort toward completion was always acknowledged and appreciated. Without them to guide and support my academic goals, I would have never thought of pursuing a doctorate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Providing accurate and timely information to policymakers is a prevalent strategy and practical method of political influence in public affairs practice. However, understanding the intraorganizational process of public affairs to develop information is unknown. In the United States healthcare sector, exploring this process is imperative with a changing landscape stemming from the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The ACA created numerous delivery system reform programs and regulations aimed at improving healthcare quality and lowering cost while affording the opportunity for healthcare delivery organizations to provide input throughout the legislative process. Not only are intraorganizational processes ambiguous in developing public affairs information strategies, there remains a lack of understanding how public affairs engage with internal stakeholders to integrate their knowledge into the information strategy. This dissertation sought to understand this link by studying the dynamics of how the information generation process works. The study also offers suggestions on how to refine the effort and make this important aspect of public administration more efficient and effective policy making. The purpose of this research was to understand internal structures, processes, and practices of public affairs functions within healthcare delivery organizations. The focus of this study was a refined understanding of how public affairs professionals engage with intraorganizational stakeholders in providing information, expertise, and knowledge as a strategy of influence to policymakers.

This opening chapter provides an overview of the study. Chapter 1 is organized commencing with the background and problem statement, providing a foundation to the study outlining issues facing current public affairs practice. The chapter continues into the study's core, presenting the research questions, a brief description of the conceptual framework, and nature of the selected research paradigm and design. Next, definitions of key terminology are provided along with illustrating scope factors, including limitations and delimitations. The chapter concludes with a statement of significance on why the study should be conducted before summarizing and transitioning to Chapter 2.

Background

The process of policymaking and implementation in the U.S. often provides an opportunity for public input (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980; Birnbaum, 1985; Fountain, 2003). Professional(s) responsible within firms and organizations for monitoring and responding to opportunities to influence public policy are often public affairs (Baysinger & Woodman, 1982; Davidson, 2014). The strategy used by public affairs throughout contemporary history is to provide feedback and shape policy proposals are information products, which include expert testimony, lobbying, comment letters, data, research projects, and position papers (Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bigelow, Arndt, & Stone, 1997; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 2002; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lord, 2000; Schuler, Rehbein, & Cramer, 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006).

The idea for conducting this inquiry was primarily through practitioner experience as a public affairs professional in the healthcare sector. The enactment of the ACA was one of the most significant laws impacting healthcare delivery (Manchikanti, Caraway,

Parr, Fellows, & Hirsh, 2011). As a highly regulated sector (Field, 2008), the complicated ACA law created an array of new delivery system reforms and initiatives aimed to improve healthcare quality and lower cost (Machikanti et al., 2011; Rosenbaum, 2011). Delivery system reform initiatives included Accountable Care Organizations; agreements by providers to be responsible for the cost and quality of care, and patient-centered medical homes that invest in primary care services to reduce cost (Machikanti et al., 2011; Rosenbaum, 2011). Other programs included hospital readmissions and hospital acquired conditions reduction, which encourages coordinated care, patient outcomes, safety and financially penalizes hospitals for poor quality (Abrams et al., 2015; Kocher & Adashi, 2011). Finally, overall value-based payment reforms to providers and hospitals aimed to reward the quality and cost of care delivered over a volume-based, fee-for-service reimbursement system (Abrams et al., 2015). Although significantly impacting the healthcare delivery system and the practice of medicine, Song and Lee (2013) argued these initiatives have received little public attention.

Policymakers need quality information and knowledge to legitimize public policy (Van Damme, Brans, & Fobè, 2011). To successfully create and administrate complex public policy, government relies on advice from outside stakeholders and experts (Van Damme et al., 2011). But policymakers are often not fully informed by quality evidence, and outside stakeholders need a better understanding of the policy environment to exert their experience and influence (Proimos, 2013). As a healthcare public affairs professional, the complexity and volume of regulations implementing several healthcare delivery system reform programs advanced the need to better understand different

practices and processes of distributing information and responding to opportunities to provide input.

Despite the necessity of a well-organized public affairs function (McGrath, Moss, & Harris, 2010), Boddewyn (2012) argued that research is needed on further understanding the flow of public affairs information and decision-making processes. Current existing scholarship does not provide a sufficient body of literature to understand how public affairs information strategies are developed. The lack of research extends more specifically to healthcare delivery organizations. Understanding how, and the extent to which, the knowledge and expertise of healthcare professionals are integrated into the development and implementation of public policy through organizational public affairs information strategies is not understood. The insufficiency of literature and importance in shaping delivery system reform programs underscored the need for this study.

Problem Statement

Government continues to rely on external expertise and advice to successfully develop and implement complex public policy (Van Damme et al., 2011). As government develops policy proposals and implements programs, organizations that provide quality, relevant information and knowledge to decision-makers are influential in the policymaking process (Fleisher, 2012; Van Damme et al., 2011). But understanding the process of how public affairs intraorganizational information flows and decision-making processes are accomplished is not well understood (Boddewyn, 2012). As the U.S. healthcare system continues to face significant challenges implementing delivery system reform initiatives (Song & Lee, 2013), the public affairs role in healthcare delivery

organizations needs to be part of shaping and improving delivery system reform programs through providing meaningful expertise and input to policymakers.

Public affairs is a profession that monitors and responds to public policy and political issues (Davidson, 2014). In the healthcare sector, monitoring policy issues is especially important throughout the implementation of complex regulation from the ACA. But public affairs practitioners continue to face issues. Problems include an ambiguous role definition, general scholarship infancy, organizational illegitimacy, and disconnectedness with the core function of organizations (Davidson, 2014; Fleisher, 2012; McGrath et al., 2010). In addition, there is a need for public affairs to be internally well-structured, but there is a lack of consensus on an ideal structure (Boddewyn, 2012; Griffin & Dunn, 2004; McGrath et al., 2010). This study investigated how public affairs engage internally within healthcare delivery organizations in developing information strategies helped fill these research gaps.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to gather qualitative data from public affairs and healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding about the structures and processes of how public affairs develop information strategies within healthcare delivery organizations located in the upper Midwest region of the U.S. Through obtaining empirical data from similar cases, the study sought to precisely understand how public affairs interact and engage with nonpublic affairs intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information for the purposes of responding to proposed public policies.

Research Questions

The primary research question captures the broad nature of the inquiry.

Subquestions provide additional probing and increased levels of specificity aimed at fulfilling the research gap and aligning with the conceptual framework. This approach ensured a rich, thick description directly linked to the study's core. As such, the primary research question was: How do public affairs professionals engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

A theoretical and conceptual framework provided a base for the study.

Knowledge transfer theory served as a guiding framework explaining intraorganizational engagement and interaction. Intraorganizationally, knowledge transfer theory explains how information, expertise, and skills move across various departments and individuals in the organization (Wambui, Wangombe, & Muthura, 2013). Knowledge transfer theory was further narrowed through a holistic perspective, which incorporates both senders and

receivers of knowledge (Thompson, Jensen, & DeTienne, 2009). A holistic perspective of knowledge transfer was appropriate because the internal interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs participants was a continuous process and both roles served as study participants.

This study honed in on the perspectives and interaction between distinct roles in an organization, and the flow of knowledge. The theoretical foundation derived from the literature was complemented with an experientially developed process-based conceptual framework. In aligning with inductive inquiry, the core portion of the conceptual framework was an unknown phenomenon depicting the relationship between healthcare delivery organization public affairs and other internal stakeholders. Existing literature, theory, and experiential knowledge all contributed to the study's framework (Maxwell, 2013).

The conceptual framework is presented as a diagram with narrative further, detailed in Figure 1 in Chapter 2. Employing experiential knowledge, the contextual lens in developing the framework and throughout the study was the perspective of a public affairs professional. At the top of the conceptual framework is proposed public policy, which may take the form of legislation or administrative rulemaking. Either of these formalized policymaking mechanisms have implications for healthcare delivery organizations, the next step. From there, public affairs assumes the responsibility for monitoring the proposed policy and begins to engage with internal stakeholders in crafting an informational response.

Understanding interaction and engagement between public affairs and intraorganizational stakeholders was unknown. The unknown represented the core of the research questions: seeking to understand what is occurring in this dynamic and how this interaction unfolds, including understanding information flows and decision-making processes. The research questions primarily asked how, aligned with a qualitative paradigm, and maintaining an inductive approach allowed data to emerge into meaningful themes to grasp the phenomena under investigation. The final piece in the conceptual framework was information generated and delivered as a product externally by public affairs in response to proposed public policy. Through intraorganizational knowledge transfer theory, the primary focus, however, was understanding the internal input dynamics prior to a public affairs informational product being delivered externally.

Nature of the study

This study was conducted using the qualitative paradigm. Qualitative paradigms allow the researcher to bring experiences and become immersed in the study (Carr, 1994; Creswell, 2013). The research questions ask how a process occurs in a complex environment, leading to inductive methods. The lack of research in organizational public affairs nuances, including internal information flow best aligns with understanding and exploration, directing to qualitative research (Boddewyn, 2012; Creswell, 2009).

Within the qualitative paradigm, a case study design was used. Case study aligns with the primary research question asking how something is done (Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2013). In addition, I sought to understand a process bounded in a contemporary, real-world setting which also best fit case study inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013).

Healthcare delivery organizations served as the unit of analysis, selected through purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2002). To enhance the quality of findings, multiple sites were studied (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I acted as the instrument, collecting various sources of data including interviews, documentation, and archival records. Yin (2013) suggested that interviews serve as the primary source of data, which I conducted using a snowballing strategy of public affairs professionals and intraorganizational stakeholders identified as most relevant by public affairs participants. I used documentation to support interviews and archival records as public information data. The use of a collective case study design allowed for themes to emerge through cross-case data analysis to produce a rich, thick description in the final case study report (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Donaldson & Mohr, 2000; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2013).

Definitions

Used frequently throughout this study, the following terms are defined and illustrated more thoroughly as part of the conceptual framework in Chapter 2:

- *Affordable Care Act*: Otherwise known as the ACA, was referred to combination of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* of 2010 (Public Law 111-148) and the *Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act* of 2010 (Public Law 111-152). Considered monumental in health policy through 10 legislative titles, the ACA made substantial changes to U.S. health policy (Rosenbaum, 2011). At the core were modifications to health insurance regulations through policy changes and coverage (Kocher, Emanuel, & DeParle, 2010; Rosenbaum, 2011). In addition, the ACA created delivery system reforms to redirect how government

purchases medical services, reducing waste, improving quality, and lowering cost (Abrams et al., 2015; Kocher et al., 2010; Machikanti et al., 2011; Rosenbaum, 2011). The final broad area was investment in public health through prevention and wellness programming (Rosenbaum, 2011).

- *Healthcare delivery organizations*: A hospital, ambulatory/outpatient facility, or integrated health system. Hospitals are institutions providing acute, emergency, and surgical care. Ambulatory or outpatient settings of care as medical group practices, clinics, clinic networks, and ambulatory surgical centers. Integrated healthcare systems as organizations such as medical centers that include hospital, ambulatory, and ancillary services (Crane, 2009; Hitchner, Richardson, Solomon, & Oppenheim, 1994).
- *Intraorganizational stakeholders*: Intraorganizational stakeholders were considered real or genuine stakeholders identified as internal constituents with direct interest and responsibility employed by the organization (Fassin, 2012). In healthcare delivery organizations, intraorganizational stakeholders may be physicians, ancillary health providers, nurses, administrative professionals, etc.
- *Information strategies*: In public affairs, information strategies were products used to influence the shaping of public policy, which may include expert testimony, lobbying, comment letters, data, research projects, and position papers (Barron, 2013; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 2002; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lord, 2000; Schuler et al., 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006).

- *Proposed public policy*: Proposed public policy was considered legislation (policy development) or administrative rulemaking (implementation) that provide opportunity for public input (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980; Birnbaum, 1985; Fountain, 2003).
- *Public affairs*: Defined as a boundary spanning role that manages an organization's external reputation and legitimacy through the interaction with the nonmarket, sociopolitical environment (Boddewyn, 2012, Davidson, 2014; Griffin & Dunn, 2004; McGrath et al., 2010).

Assumptions

Assumptions are elements of the design that may impact the study, but the researcher lacks the ability to control (Baron, 2008). Presented hierarchically, three assumptions were relevant to the core basis of the research design and data collection: (a) sampled healthcare delivery systems bridge their organization with the policy environment; (b) case sites work through their designated public affairs to develop information strategies; and (c) in data collection, participants responded honestly and truthfully.

The first assumption was that sampled healthcare delivery organizations actively sought to provide input and shape public policy as a bridge to the external environment. Meznar and Nigh (1995) published seminal work on public affairs arguing organizations either *bridge* or *buffer* against the external environment. In other words, organizations either broadly attempt to facilitate change with the external sociopolitical environment or insulate against (Meznar & Nigh, 1995). This assumption holds organizations part of the

purposeful sample function within a bridging philosophy—embracing healthcare delivery system reforms and a desire at attempting to improve such development and implementation, even if cautiously.

The next assumption was that selected healthcare delivery organizations facilitate information strategies through public affairs. Given the responsibilities of a public affairs function, it was assumed the organizational role develops and delivers informational products. Through experiential knowledge, however, the staffing size of healthcare delivery organizations (thousands of employees) may result in some stakeholders developing and delivering information strategies absent the knowledge or input from public affairs.

The final assumption related to interviewing. As a primary source of data, interviews are integral to case study research (Yin, 2013). Interviewees were provided an opportunity to offer responses in a safe environment, and I assumed that answers were honest and truthful. Despite confidentiality assurance and member-checking procedures illustrated further in Chapter 3, the face value of interview data were assumed as the reflection of the actual phenomena.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study could have been conducted in a variety of organizations and firms across different sectors of the economy. The particular focus was on understanding public affairs, information strategies, and stakeholder engagement within healthcare delivery organizations. The unique position of the healthcare sector was supported by addressing significant change as a result of the ACA, and more recently,

enactment of new Medicare value-based payment policy as a result of the Medicare Access and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act of 2015 (Delbanco, 2015). Healthcare delivery organizations as sites also supported case study design within the current, real-world context.

A practical delimitation was the location of selected healthcare delivery organizations. To maintain reasonable costs associated with conducting research, organizations were chosen within a defined geographic region. More narrowly, another delimiting factor was soliciting participants amongst a pool of potentially thousands of healthcare organizational staff. Applying a tightly controlled snowballing approach, the case study only sampled and interviewed public affairs and intraorganizational stakeholders relevant to public affairs information strategy. This delimitation helped keep the case study manageable, and within the scope of the research problem and questions.

The final delimitation was strong reliance on existing theoretical constructs. In reviewing the literature and existing theory, there was a tendency to seek theories to fit the research problem and questions. The challenge was finding and applying a menu of organizational theories to explain separate components of the study. Public affairs is often ambiguously defined and viewed as disconnected or peripheral relative to the core function of the organization (Dahan, 1995; Davidson, 2014). As such, Maxwell (2013) cautioned against imposing theory on the study into predetermined categories, preventing the researcher from seeing outside the existing theories. Although qualitative case study designs may use existing theory (Dobson, 1999), constructing the conceptual framework did not predominantly use existing theory. However, conceptual frameworks may include

theoretical work (Rocco & Plahotnik, 2009). Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers allocate some attention to existing theory in qualitative research. As such, the conceptual and theoretical framework were complementary to one another without a strong reliance on existing theory in conducting this study.

Limitations

Qualitative research and case study designs have limitations. Generalization remained one of the prevalent shortcomings of case studies, even employing multiple case sites (Yin, 1999). Statistical generalization is not readily plausible following the principles of selective, purposeful sampling. Nonetheless, Yin (1999) responded that multiple case studies are equivalent to experiments. Like case studies, experiments with controlled environments also constrain vigorous arguments of generalization. Another methodological weakness of qualitative research was potential for applying bias. Since I was immersed with data collection, the opportunity for bias was readily available. I inadvertently may lead interviewees with questions towards predetermined outcomes, or only observe and report phenomena supporting my existing perspective. I kept a journal to aid in documenting any potential bias and submitted as a data artifact for analysis and discussion.

In addressing shortcomings in qualitative case study designs, steps were taken to enhance quality. Quality assurance strategies included credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability, and application (Krefting, 1991; Miles et al., 2014). First, triangulation was a core strategy, strengthening findings and producing a rich, thick description by collecting data from multiple sources, sites, methods and participants

(Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Krefting, 1991; Maxwell, 2013; Mays & Pope, 2000; Patton, 2002). I used triangulation of organizations (multiple sites), data sources (interviews, documents, public records) and participants (public affairs and organizational stakeholders) in this study. Second, I employed member checking (respondent validation) which allowed participants to review transcripts or notes from their interviews, enhancing credibility through accuracy (Maxwell, 2013; Mays & Pope, 2000; Miles et al., 2014). Third, journaling was a tactic I used to acknowledge and document self-reflections and influence on the study (Carlson, 2010). Next, I maintained a case study database, coupled with clearly defined and consistent coding procedures increased the confirmability and dependability of findings, contributing to the audit trail (Yin, 2013). Finally, I compiled a case study report which culminated the findings into application, providing implications for public affairs practice, public administration, and social change (Miles et al., 2014). Additional details on quality assurance procedures are described in Chapter 3.

Significance

Healthcare delivery organizations are in the midst of constant change and challenges (Mosquera, 2014; Terry, Ritchie, Marbury, Smith, & Pofeldt, 2014). From pressure by policymakers, businesses, and consumers to improve the healthcare delivery system, studying healthcare organizations was relevant and meaningful. This study was pursued to fulfill gaps in the research literature and contributed to the practice of public affairs. Despite the importance of a well-organized public affairs function contributing to providing policy knowledge externally to policymakers, there is a lack of understanding

on how this actually works intraorganizationally (Boddewyn, 2012; Fleisher, 2012; McGrath et al., 2010). Unveiling processes from healthcare delivery organizations, including barriers, benefited public affairs practice and public administration.

Understanding how healthcare delivery organizations leverage the knowledge of internal stakeholders to use toward information strategies throughout the policymaking process was the goal of this study. Public affairs needs to be the catalyst of integrating the knowledge and expertise of professionals in healthcare organizations into meaningful input to policymakers. As regulators implement delivery system reforms from the ACA, transferring robust information to policymakers incorporating the knowledge of clinicians practicing medical care provides for societal benefit. To aid in shaping public policy, experts practicing and managing medical care possess critical knowledge, but leveraging public affairs with obtaining and employing embedded knowledge is a continuous challenge. The outcome of this study was to understand how to engage and harness the knowledge of nonpublic affairs professionals to provide valuable feedback, and be influential and successful in assisting policymakers (Fleisher, 2012).

Summary

In Chapter, 1 I illustrated the overall introduction and overview of the study. The background was presented providing the basis of how the research originated. Next, the problem statement provided the base of the study, identifying issues facing the public affairs profession and gaps in the literature. The purpose statement grounded the study concisely, depicting the study's intentions. A conceptual framework proceeded, illustrating the relationships between the various components of the study. Explanation

and support of a qualitative paradigm and case study design followed with a brief summarization of the methodology. Definitions of key terms were provided, which frequently appear throughout the dissertation. Next, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations were illustrated and supported, along with a brief explanation of quality assurance strategies. Finally, I concluded the chapter with a statement of research significance, focusing on the ever-changing landscape of healthcare policy, and the importance of public affairs acting as a catalyst in providing value in the policymaking process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices of public affairs in providing information as a strategy of influence in healthcare delivery organizations. As a strategy of political leverage, organizations supply information to policymakers throughout the public decision-making process. The research built on the importance of a well-organized public affairs function, and the need for further inquiry into internal factors of public affairs information flow and decision-making procedures. The problem faced by public affairs practitioners in healthcare delivery organizations was the need for knowledge and expertise from nonpublic affairs professionals integrated into information provided to policymakers. However, the literature indicated a young academic field, functional ambiguity in defining the role and structure of public affairs, and incomplete research on intraorganizational structures and processes that provided a base for the study. There was much to be discovered about the role of public affairs within healthcare delivery organizations. To provide support for the study, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of literature.

Chapter 2 is organized as follows. To start, the overall literature review strategy is described in detail. Next, the theoretical and conceptual framework is presented, described, and supported as a basis for the qualitative inquiry. A holistic theory of knowledge transfer, focusing on embedded information, served as the theoretical framework. The conceptual framework followed, which included a diagram and narrative

description. The review of literature is divided into subsections based on the pertinence of articles and content to the research problem and questions. Current literature in public affairs introduces the reader to studies related to the topic and includes the identified research gap. The review transitions to incorporate both current and noncurrent literature in public affairs to build a framework of knowledge about the problem. The next subsection is organized beginning with literature related to providing information to policymakers as a public affairs strategy, followed by research on intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices of public affairs related to the strategy of providing information, starting broadly and gradually narrowing in scope. I conclude Chapter 2 with an overall summation, providing a basis and foundation for the research design in Chapter 3.

Strategy and Approach to the Review of Literature

The purpose of this section describes the overall strategy and approach to conducting the review of the literature. Applying Cooper's (1985) taxonomy of literature reviews as a general guide, this first part illustrates the review's focus, goal, perspective, organization, and audience. The subsequent segment provides detailed procedures on establishing the review's coverage and article search strategy.

The review of literature has primary and secondary foci (Randolph, 2009). Primary focus is on fundamental concepts and findings related to research outcomes, common in literature reviews (Randolph, 2009; Webster & Watson, 2002). Data collection questions and framework development are explained by the findings in prior research, building the necessary structure for inquiry into the topic. As a secondary focus,

practical applications are also acknowledged. An essential aspect of developing the study was identified from a problem in the practice of public affairs. Researching the problem through practice was in alignment with Walden University's mission of advancing positive social change, emphasizing students to be scholar-practitioners in applying new research in a practical manner.

In addition to focus, literature reviews should have goals (Randolph, 2002). First, this review analyzed relevant research and identified central issues and concepts in the public affairs and corporate political strategies literature. This step built the study's conceptual framework and the current knowledge base (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Second, the review provided evidence a research gap existed relevant to the research problem (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Finally, the review provides support for administering the research design illustrated in Chapter 3.

Research methodology may employ a particular perspective or lens to a literature review. In qualitative research, bias is a factor that an author brings which ought to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). One of the leading elements creating the foundation of the study's research questions was built on experience and problems faced by public affairs practitioners. As such, literature and study execution gravitated toward the perspective of a public affairs practitioner. However, in this study, the goal was to understand relevant literature, quantitative and qualitative, original and secondary, disciplinary-specific and multidisciplinary, absent of a specific researcher advocacy lens.

Coherently organizing the literature helps guide the reader. In following Webster and Watson (2002), the literature was organized and presented in relationship to the core

concepts of the study's conceptual framework. In constructing and structuring the review, it was written as a broad-to-narrow synthesis, known as the funnel method (Hofstee, 2006). Broad, general themes from the literature are presented first, followed by a gradual transition to more specific articles related to the research topic. Each section finished with the most specific literature available related to the study, proceeded with a conclusion and transition.

Finally, literature reviews should be crafted to acknowledge the intended audience (Boote & Beile, 2005). As Randolph (2002) noted, the primary audience for this doctoral dissertation was the chair, committee members, and the Walden University School of Public Policy and Administration. A secondary, but important audience was practitioners in public affairs and scholars whom may benefit from the study outcomes.

Coverage and Strategy

One of the critical facets in a review of the literature is determining how broad the search covers a topic (Randolph, 2009; Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). For purposes of this dissertation, I used an exhaustive review, but articles were delimited based on the search strategy explained in the following paragraphs.

Jennex (2015) reinforced the importance of coverage by cautioning against applying weak criteria when seeking and selecting articles. Using weak criteria is especially admonished when the goal is an exhaustive search. The approach for gathering relevant current literature was obtained using databases from the Walden University library services and Google Scholar. Articles were drawn from peer-reviewed scholarly texts predominately from Public Policy, Business, Management, and Political Science-

related databases. The first measure in the literature review were online searches conducted throughout interdisciplinary research databases and limited to include current peer-reviewed sources, full texts, and published since January 2009. Initial terms from the database search included: public affairs, government affairs, or government relations. These terms were cross-referenced with information strategy, intraorganization and intraorganizational. In addition, public affairs and internal were used to locate articles with notations in the published literature abstracts.

A paucity of current relevant literature recently published was closely linked to the study in public affairs scholarship. Database searches were extended beyond the standard 5-year timeframe. The purpose of this strategy was to seek any relevant literature related to the key terms in the public affairs field. Webster and Watson (2002) classified this type of review as emerging, whereby a mature body of literature topically relevant does not yet exist. Thus, public affairs, government affairs, or government relations were used as search terms combined with information strategy was further extended in Political Science Complete and Business Source Complete databases to 1975. Also, public affairs joined with internal as terms located in study abstracts as well. Finally, all article abstracts published since the inception of the *Journal of Public Affairs* in 2001 were reviewed.

Backward searching aided the extension of the review of literature to noncurrent articles. This technique sought additional literature in article reference sections, otherwise known as backward snowballing (Webster & Watson, 2002; Wohlin, 2014). Snowballing provided insight to further database searches, specifically in discovering relevant

literature denoted as research in corporate political activities and corporate political strategies. Although terminology was not identical and explicit to public affairs, literature related to the topic overlapped, and terms appeared to be used interchangeably. As a dedicated professional journal in public affairs was launched in 2001, other relevant research appeared in the business, management, and political science literature on corporate political activities/strategies prior to and after 2001. Given this discovery, interdisciplinary database searches were repeated using corporate political activities or corporate political strategies. The terms were linked with information strategy, intraorganization, intraorganizational, and intrafirm to collect additional articles.

In sum, the review of literature was approached and constructed guided by Cooper's (1985) taxonomy. No specific perspective guided the literature review. In seeking and selecting relevant articles, I used an exhaustive approach and included current and noncurrent resources from interdisciplinary databases. Finally, I organized the review organized by concepts, and written for an academic audience and public affairs professionals.

Theoretical Framework

This section describes in detail the core foundation and components of the inquiry. Theory is introduced as a base, complemented with a conceptual framework illustrated as a diagram followed by a narrative description. The intent of using a conceptual framework in tandem with theory illustrated and mapped the relationships between concepts used in a study, to build on the review of literature, and provide support for the research problem and purpose (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009).

Agreeing on consistent theoretical constructs in public affairs scholarship is an ongoing challenge. Conducting a comprehensive review of various theoretical strands used in public affairs research, Getz (2002) argued there is a lack of universal theory of public affairs, external relations, and political strategy. Getz (2002) classified existing theory broadly on why firms participate in politics, strategies employed, and existing limitations for executing political action. However, the primary research question in this study focused on understanding intraorganizationally how a firm develops a specific public affairs strategy. More specifically, the study emphasized engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals in developing information products in healthcare delivery organizations. The review of various theoretical strands in public affairs provided by Getz (2002) did not allude to the specificity and depth sought in the study.

Theories in organizational literature assisted in providing a framework. Existing knowledge-based theory aims at the core aspect of the study on the engagement of embedded information within organizations for public affairs information strategy. Originating in the information systems community and further derived from knowledge and management research (Jasimuddin, Connell, & Klein, 2012), *knowledge transfer theory* provided a theoretical lens to draw an understanding of the problem and process in healthcare delivery organizations. Knowledge transfer theory is an understanding of the process and problems by which expertise, knowledge, and skills are moved across different functions of the organization (Wambui, Wangombe, & Muthura, 2013). The knowledge needed by public affairs in a boundary spanning role (Boddewyn, 2012) is a

means by which to engage nonpublic affairs intraorganizational stakeholders to fill the gap necessary to fully understand proposed public policy and develop information products.

Knowledge is defined as situated, reusable, effective, and action-oriented (Thompson et. al., 2009). Despite conflicting interpretations and definitions of what constitutes knowledge versus information, a common theme from the literature considers knowledge as action-oriented (Jasimuddin et al., 2012). Broadly, two types of knowledge exist: explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge is formalized, storable, and easily expressible (Joia & Lemos, 2009). In contrast, tacit, or hidden knowledge is considered embedded, subjective, unique, gained from experience, and difficult to express (Joia & Lemos, 2009; Sroka, Cygler, & Gajdzik, 2014; Wambui et al., 2013). Transferring tacit knowledge suggests collaboration is necessary between senders and receivers (Tang, 2011).

Scholars argue knowledge transfer is considered crucial to business and organizational success, but often challenging to execute (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013; Sroka et al., 2014; Tang, 2011; Wambui et al., 2013). This study analyzed how information is engaged, flows, and how knowledge is moved within healthcare delivery organizations between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals. The objective of tacit knowledge moved between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals within the same organization was for taking action with a public affairs information-based product.

This study focused on the perspectives and interaction of distinct roles in an organization, and the knowledge that moves between them. A holistic perspective of organizational knowledge transfer theory is comprised of two perspectives. First, the role

of the sender was considered through the diffusion and externalization of embedded information generally known as stock (Thompson et al., 2009). The other perspective was the receiver of embedded information used to create new knowledge (Thompson et al., 2009). The socially oriented process by which embedded information was engaged is considered the action of using the received embedded information (Thompson et al., 2009). In other words, rather than theories focused on the sender or receiver of knowledge, a holistic framework considers interaction of the sender, receiver, and social engagement with embedded information (Thompson et al., 2009).

In their theory, Thompson, Jensen, and DeTienne (2009) distinguished the roles of sender and receiver as information or knowledge. The sender is explicitly providing their knowledge to the receiver. The receiver interprets the knowledge as information, unless accepted and used. Knowledge must be accessible, understandable, relevant, desired, usable, and repeatable to be transferred effectively. Without meeting these conditions, knowledge transfer cannot occur. Thompson et al. argued that the emphasis on the process of engagement and action which represented the core issue sought in the conceptual framework, illustrated in the next section of this chapter.

A holistic perspective of knowledge transfer extends existing theory and was appropriate for this study. Using the tenets of Thompson et al. (2009), engaging embedded information and tacit knowledge within healthcare delivery organizations for public affairs strategies was the study's core. Research questions reflected the engagement of intraorganizational information and knowledge. The design of the study considered the perspectives of both senders and receivers of information and knowledge,

and was interchangeable between the distinct organizational roles of the participants. As explained further in this chapter, existing literature in public affairs scholarship suggested organizations manage intraorganizational resources and facilitate a process for nonpublic affairs stakeholders to provide expertise in crafting information strategies. However, this process is unclear in the literature and may be explained and extended through a holistic perspective of knowledge transfer theory.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, an existing theory was developed further into a comprehensive structure. As such, the conceptual framework built on the theoretical lens and is intended to acknowledge and follow the philosophical approach of qualitative inquiry. In allowing data to emerge, the core aspect of the conceptual framework was bounded at the healthcare organizational and departmental level, but not further explained nor defined by existing theory. The primary emphasis of the framework was constructing interrelationships intraorganizationally. In addition to knowledge transfer theory, findings from the study may relate back to or support existing theory used in public affairs research, such as the various theoretical threads illustrated in Getz (2002).

A diagram supported by a narrative description illustrated the study's conceptual framework. Existing literature and theories provided a description of the components of the conceptual framework and experiential knowledge aids in the development of the interrelationships. Maxwell (2013) argued that the incorporation of experiential knowledge is important and an acceptable practice in designing qualitative research, but frequently overlooked. In this study, experiential knowledge generated from professional

experience and interaction with public affairs colleagues was used to design the conceptual framework. Finally, existing theory helped illuminate some existing relationships of the conceptual framework, but could not explain all the aspects of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates the relationships amongst core elements of the study, which is followed by a narrative description of each component.

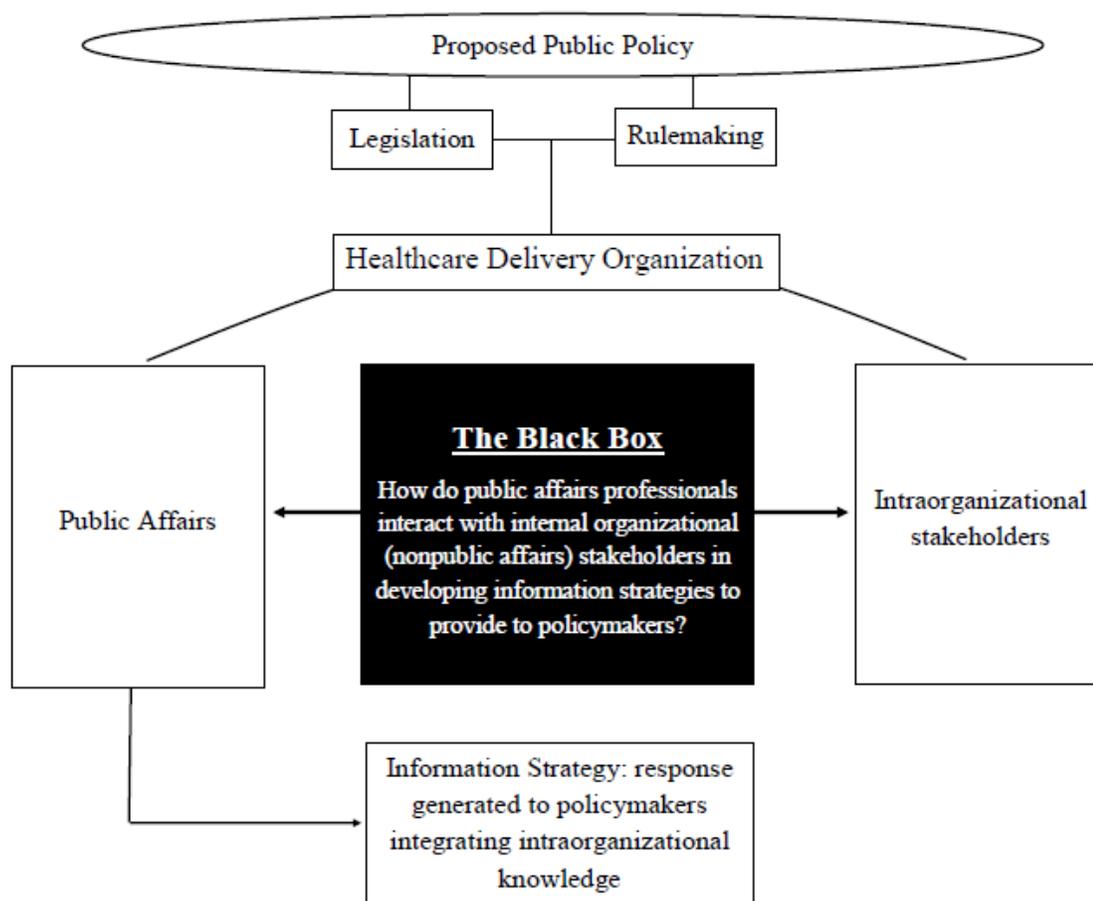


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Proposed Public Policy

At the crest of the conceptual framework is proposed public policy. As a regulator, government exerts a significant level of influence over various sectors of

society through enacting laws and rules (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980). Bigelow, Arndt, and Stone (1997) argued the fundamental importance for hospital survival is to engage in sociopolitical and economic environments. Nearly every facet of the U.S. healthcare delivery system is regulated by a public agency, often at multiple levels and overlapped (Field, 2008). In addition, as a purchaser of healthcare delivery services, government has a compelling position in hospital and clinical finance and practice (Galvin, 2003). The role of government in healthcare delivery points toward a reliance on public policy, often interpreted by resource dependence theory (Getz, 2002). In the context of corporate political activity, resource dependence focuses on the relationships between an organization and external environment to explain why a firm would be motivated to politically participate and to develop strategies to engage in the policymaking process (Getz, 2002).

Generally, formalized proposed public policies are born from two mechanisms: legislation and rulemaking. As resource dependence theory suggests, legislative and regulatory mechanisms towards healthcare delivery organizations act presumptively as a trigger for public affairs action and present opportunities for engagement and influence (Boddewyn, 2012; Getz, 2002). A common arena for policymaking is the legislative process, which provides an opportunity for groups, organizations, and individuals to influence lawmaking (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980). In addition to the legislative process, healthcare delivery organizations may seek to shape the administrative rulemaking process of policymaking. The process of federal rulemaking is statutorily outlined in Section 553 of the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946 which specifically allows

public participation in guiding the implementation of agency regulations (Birnbaum, 1985; Fountain, 2003). Therefore, proposed policy may be broadly categorized as either legislative or regulatory, prompting action from public affairs to (as necessary) seek intraorganizational knowledge for analytical and response purposes.

Healthcare Delivery Organizations

The role of public affairs spans across various economic sectors. For the intent of this study, healthcare delivery organizations with a designated public affairs function were the primary unit of analysis. Within the conceptual framework, healthcare delivery organizations were defined in the research by meeting one of the following organizational structures described by Crane (2009), and Hitchner, Richardson, Solomon, and Oppenheim (1994): (a) hospitals, (b) ambulatory/outpatient settings of care, or (c) integrated healthcare systems. Crane (2009) defined hospitals as institutions offering acute, emergency, and surgical care. Ambulatory or outpatient settings are often medical group practices, clinics, clinic networks, and ambulatory surgical centers (Crane, 2009). Integrated healthcare systems are organizations and institutions, such as medical centers that include hospital, ambulatory, and ancillary services (Crane, 2009; Hitchner et al., 1994). In addition, to meet the prescribed parameters, organizations must have had a designated public affairs function, department, or team, defined more specifically in the following section.

Defining the Public Affairs Function

Defining public affairs is a continuous challenge. Organizations and firms often employ professionals to manage relationships with the political environment

(Blumentritt, 2003). Despite the well-known need for professionals with skills to manage political settings, a continuous issue in the literature is the lack of a universally accepted consensus on defining public affairs (Boddewyn, 2012; Dahan, 2005; Davidson, 2014; McGrath et al., 2010). Schuler and Rehbein (1997), and Schuler (1996) argued that organizations possessing a formal public affairs unit indicates an investment and strategy by the organization to carefully monitor the external environment. Investment leads to heightened organizational-level political awareness, involvement, and policy expertise (Martin, 1995; Schuler & Rehbein, 1997; Schuler, 1996). However, despite the growth of public affairs as a field internationally (Davidson, 2014), challenges with role definition remain. Issues include clearly defining public affairs, and the view as a disconnected role in the core business of the organization, undermining credibility and legitimacy as a professional function (Davidson, 2014; Fleisher, 2012; McGrath et al., 2010; Shaffer, 1995).

If the role of sociopolitical engagement within the organization is absent of a widely accepted definition, then terminology also varies. Baysinger and Woodman (1982), Griffin, Fleisher, Brenner, and Boddewyn (2001), and Schuler and Rehbein (1997) suggested that organizational specialties focused on the external environment may be referred to as issues management, government relations, public affairs, government affairs, corporate affairs, or legal affairs. Baysinger and Woodman (1982) and Davidson (2014) noted that some specific functions of public affairs may overlap with other professions, such as public relations. These responsibilities include issues management,

political engagement, institution engagement and information gathering (Baron, 1995; Schuler & Rehbein, 1997).

To best characterize the service of public affairs required piecing together various definitions and arguments from the literature. Baysinger and Woodman (1982) and Davidson (2014) considered public affairs as an activity beyond lobbying that primarily monitors, responds to, and influences the external regulatory and the context of political/public policy. Post, Murray, Dickie, and Mahon (1983) expanded the definition from functional status, suggesting public affairs is responsible for maintaining external, sociopolitical legitimacy. Baron (1995) suggested that an even broader depiction of external orientation as an organization's nonmarket environment; engagement with the public, government, external stakeholders, and media. Boddewyn (2012) agreed and argued that any definition of public affairs must include nonmarket. Thus, drawing works from Baron (1995), Baysinger and Woodman (1982), Boddewyn (2012), Davidson (2014), Griffin and Dunn (2004), McGrath, Moss, and Harris (2010), and Post et al. (1983), public affairs was defined in this study as a boundary-spanning role which manages an organization's external reputation and legitimacy through the interaction with the nonmarket, sociopolitical environment.

Intraorganizational Stakeholders

Nonmarket issues faced by healthcare organizations may be disparate. As such, public affairs need to interact with numerous intraorganizational stakeholders to understand the impact of differing issues. Internal stakeholders are considered resources available for public affairs practitioners to assist with information strategies. Although

often in alignment or in compliance of institutional environments (Bluedorn, Johnson, Cartwright, & Barringer, 1994), Getz (2002) argued institutional theory helps explain how available resources within organizations are used in public affairs strategies and tactics.

This qualitative research was intended to study the interactions between the public affairs function and internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders. The key term applied in the inquiry was intraorganizational, or between employees within a firm or organization, such as service lines and teams (Woodland & Hutton, 2012). Dahan (2005) broadly proposed that public affairs professionals have various institutional resources within their firms to leverage expertise on specific policy matters relevant to the organization. Oberman (1993) linked resources to institutional theory for the ability of communication activities to flourish between organizations and public affairs (as cited in Getz, 2002).

This study sought real or genuine stakeholders, defined as internal constituents with direct interest and responsibility employed by the organization (Fassin, 2012). In healthcare delivery organizations, intraorganizational stakeholders may be a cluster of professionals. Nonpublic affairs stakeholders may have included physicians, executive leadership, clinicians, nursing staff, legal, quality, finance, compliance, customer service, engineers, and other departments/professionals. The exact individual or department assuming the role of an intraorganizational stakeholder may depend on the specific public policy proposal or issue presented necessitating a response by public affairs.

The Intraorganizational Black Box

How public affairs interact and engage with internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders to provide information to policymakers is unclear. Organizations which develop a trusting relationship with lawmakers and viewed as providing meaningful input gain and maintain access, and are considered more influential and valuable throughout the public decision-making process (Barron, 2013; Fleisher, 2000; Fleisher, 2012; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Schuler et al., 2002; Sonnenfeld, 1984). However, to actually address public policy issues and respond externally, there is a substantial preceding component. The prior aspect is the need for public affairs to be well-organized internally and develop effective processes to gather information from internal experts and respond to policy issues (McGrath et al., 2010; Sonnenfeld, 1984). The question remained: how is this done within healthcare delivery organizations?

The intraorganizational black box of the conceptual framework represented the core gap in the research literature and purpose of the study. There is only very limited research on the intraorganizational implications of corporate political activity (Skippari, 2005). More specifically, transferring messages effectively within organizations and understanding how public affairs manage internal information flow is not well researched (Boddewyn, 2012; Fleisher, 2000; Griffin & Dunn, 2004). Fleisher (2002) further argued that internal management rarely receives refined information on public policy or even has a strategy on how to work with the information. In fact, Sonnenfeld (1984) called the internal process a “chaotic map of assigning public affairs responsibilities” (p.69). Furthermore, other intraorganizational facets of public affairs needs further inquiry

including designing public affairs activities, governance structures, integration with market strategies, and interrelationships of internal pressures (Griffin & Dunn, 2004; Hillman, Keim, & Schuler, 2004). In other words, research suggests the importance of providing information to lawmakers and being well-organized internally—how to operationally develop strategies and products is unknown, and completely absent in the literature on healthcare delivery organizations. The lack of understanding and clarity of public affairs intraorganizationally constituted the black box of the conceptual framework under investigation.

Providing Information as a Strategy of Influence

The means by which organizations interact with the political and public policy environment are strategies (Blumentritt, 2003). Activities and strategies organizations wield to influence public policy are numerous (Bigelow et al., 1997; Skippari, 2005). The final component of the conceptual framework was delivering information to policymakers in response to a public policy proposal, a nonmarket strategy commonly used strategy of political influence (Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 1997; Schuler et al., 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). Dahan (2005) suggested organizations have internal resources to provide technical, economic, social, legal and administrative expertise for public affairs activities. Information and knowledge may be delivered in the form of lobbying, reports, testimony as subject-matter experts, participating in regulatory committees, and supplying position papers (Bigelow et al., 1997; Birnbaum, 1985; Cook, Shortell, Conrad, & Morrissey, 1983; Hillman & Hitt, 1999).

In sum, the conceptual framework described and connected the components of the study. As an externalized trigger, proposed public policy created the need for public affairs to respond with information and knowledge. It was assumed intraorganizational stakeholders are nonpublic affairs professionals who possess the skills, expertise, and knowledge to aid in responding to a proposed public policy bill or rule. How the interaction occurs between public affairs intraorganizational stakeholders in healthcare delivery organizations was unknown and reflected in the model. Finally, the conceptual framework illustrated the information strategy and tactics as a final product—an output mechanism developed by public affairs spanning intraorganizational boundaries, working with various internal stakeholders to deliver feedback externally on proposed policy.

Review of the Literature

The first section commences with a broad, general overview of organizational public affairs and intraorganizational aspects of the role and identify the research gap. In the absence of a significant body of current research, the section concludes with a transition and rationale for extending the review to noncurrent research literature in the public affairs field. Noncurrent literature is synthesized with relevancy linked to the conceptual framework with specific work related to the strategy of providing information as a political strategy of influence. The goal of integrating current and noncurrent literature builds a stronger foundation for the study relevant to the research topic.

A review of current literature in public affairs begins the section. When I employed the literature search strategies described in previous sections, database searches produced a very limited set of tangentially relevant articles in the academic discipline

related to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices of providing information as a strategy of political influence. However, current literature produced an overview of current issues in public affairs, and provided the research gap reflected in the conceptual framework.

The Current State of Public Affairs

As a young academic discipline, the organizational function of public affairs lacks a universal theory and model. In performing a content analysis reviewing over 100 articles, Davidson (2014) noted the absence of an overarching, dominant theoretical orientation for public affairs. As the editorial team for the *Journal of Public Affairs*, McGrath et al. (2010) agreed. McGrath et al. (2010) indicated that a growing maturity of public affairs academia and practice, but also acknowledged the inadequacy of a grand public affairs theory. The absence of a general theoretical construct in the public affairs field provided support that employing a conceptual framework was appropriate for the study.

The professional and academic discipline also does not agree on a universal interpretation of public affairs. Davidson (2014), and McGrath et al. (2010) argued that public affairs struggles with a universal definition of the function and role. McGrath et al. (2010) recognized the circularity and painstaking nature of the definition debate. Nevertheless, McGrath et al. (2010) synthesized prior studies to define public affairs as the organizational profession managing an organization's reputation and legitimacy through the interaction with the external environment. Strategically, management included lobbying, government affairs, media relations, community relations and issues

management. In response, Boddewyn (2012) expressed direct surprise of McGrath's et al. (2010) lack of the term nonmarket explicitly in their public affairs definition. Boddewyn (2012) argued nonmarket needs to be included in proposing any definition of public affairs.

Despite arguments for a standard definition, McGrath et al. (2010) advanced perspectives on issues of defining the profession. Not only does a lack of clarity in definition create scholarly debates, but definitional ambiguity undermines functional status and credibility as a profession within organizations (McGrath et al., 2010). Fleisher (2012) affirmed this argument. Fleisher (2012) suggested in an anniversary paper published in the *Journal of Public Affairs* the next generation (Public Affairs Model 2.0) may be the catalyst for public affairs professionals to gain organizational recognition, working to improve current issues with credibility. Although previous sections in this chapter defined the function of public affairs for purposes of the conceptual framework, current literature still argues the prevailing perception of public affairs as functionally ambiguous, necessitating enhanced credibility. This perception may be attributed to the research problem and a factor explain why current research has not investigated intraorganizational dynamics more in-depth.

Some limited insight has been generated in public affairs scholarship. Current literature connected some intraorganizational characteristics of the role and on the specific strategy of providing information to policymakers. Reflecting on the first decade of dedicated published literature in public affairs, Fleisher (2012) outlined the research and practitioner goals of public affairs for the next decade. Fleisher (2012) coined the

next generation of the profession as the Public Affairs Model 2.0 to build on earlier work (2000+PA model) appearing in the launching issue of the Journal of Public Affairs. Amongst other matters, challenges, and research agendas, Fleisher (2012) dedicated a section to argue the importance of the public affairs strategy to provide refined information to influence stakeholders. Griffin (1999) as cited in Fleisher (2012), suggested that organizations assisting decision makers by supplying input deemed helpful in decision-making processes would be more influential in policymaking. Baron (1995) determined this as the gathering of intelligence to uniquely position organizations to solve nonmarket issues (as cited in Fleisher, 2012).

Although providing refined information throughout the policymaking process is important, understanding how the preceding aspect of generating the information is unclear. Boddewyn (2012) offered insight on the organizational structure of public affairs and internal process flow of information. Considered another leader in public affairs scholarship, Boddewyn (2012) responded to McGrath et al. (2010) by providing additional insight on the organizational positioning of public affairs. In terms of structural aspects of public affairs, including role and location, Boddewyn (2012) argued that past studies have produced perplexity, suggesting previous work has been inadequate or has been asking the wrong questions. In calling for additional research, Boddewyn (2012) suggested the need for research into understanding decision-making processes and how public affairs information flows within organizations. As illustrated by Boddewyn's (2012) reflections, there are remaining gaps to be explored, including structuring public

affairs and exploring process-based features such as information flow and decision-making.

As an academic discipline, public affairs is immature. Only since 2000 has a scholarly journal been dedicated specifically to the profession. Lingering issues on consensus toward a universal definition of public affairs remain, along with problems of perceived organizational legitimacy. There is no overarching or consistent theoretical construct specific to the public affairs field. Current literature also suggests ambiguity, specifically the structure and position of public affairs, how public affairs information flows in a boundary spanning function, and how decisions are made internally (Boddewyn, 2012). Scholars argue a well-structured public affairs function is necessary (McGrath et al., 2010) and providing information to policymakers is a useful strategy (Fleisher, 2012). However, understanding how public affairs actually work intraorganizationally to generate the knowledge and information is a gap not researched in current literature.

In sum, the review of the state of public affairs in the context of current literature produces a limited, but important basis for diving into the problem and topic in greater depth. Therefore, the following section presents relevant, current and noncurrent public affairs literature. The expanded review is intended to grasp better understanding into the strategy of providing information to lawmakers throughout the public policy cycle. The section includes a definitive focus on the intraorganizational dynamics and processes necessary to develop and deliver information.

Intraorganizational Dynamics of Providing Information as a Strategy

In the prior section, I reviewed current public affairs literature. Current research assessed aimed at understanding current issues in the profession to determine what is known, and how the research related to the intraorganizational dynamics of public affairs. No current literature directly linking the study's problem and purpose was located. However, the research gap on the lack of understanding internal processes and information flow was identified from current scholarly articles. This section is presented by first focusing on the public affairs strategy linked to the study's core: providing information to policymakers. The outcome was to determine the existence of literature related to the public affairs strategy of providing information in the policymaking process. Additionally, the literature reviewed includes a focus on exploring the concepts and outcomes of the literature on how public affairs function internally to provide this information.

The goal of this portion is not to provide an exhaustive review of all public affairs strategies employed in their organizational function. This section hones in on: (a) the specific strategy of providing information and, (b) how public affairs execute the strategy through intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices. As database searches produced minimal literature encompassing both aspects, this section is presented in distinct tracks. The first segment includes synthesized articles on providing information as a strategy of influence. The second part contains literature on intraorganizational dynamics of public affairs, encompassing the limited studies that provide a glimpse of linking both aspects together. As a strategy, this section is expanded to include closely

relevant, non-current literature to obtain a firm grasp of related research specifically within the infant public affairs academic field.

Providing information as a strategy of influence. Various facets of public affairs scholarship have received attention. Research on the function of public affairs, the motivation to politically participate in the policymaking process, relationships between political actors, and the strategies employed by organizations to influence policy has been rich (Barron, 2013; Blumentritt, 2003). Although disagreement remains on drilling down a universal definition of public affairs, Davidson (2014) suggested that a core function and strategy is influencing the external nonmarket environment. Key external, nonmarket actors are frequently policymakers, including elected officials and agency officials. As policymakers are often not fully informed on policies and consequences, firms may influence their opinions (Lohmann, 1995). Organizational political engagement may be broadly categorized as buffering a firm to insulate and resist changes to external environment, or bridging an organization with the changing landscape with information or pressure strategies (Meznar & Nigh, 1995; Lord, 2000).

A common organizational strategy of political influence is providing information to policymakers (Aplin & Hegarty; 1980; Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Bigelow et al., 1997; Birnbaum, 1985; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 1997; Getz, 2002; Lord, 2000; Rehbein & Lenway, 1994; Schuler et al., 2002; Sonnefeld, 1984; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). In practice, executing the public affairs information strategy is supported by specific tactics, including: lobbying, reports, white papers, data, expert testimony, research projects and position papers (Bigelow et

al., 1997; Birnbaum, 1985; Dahan, 2005; Getz, 1997; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lord, 2000; Rehbein & Lenway, 1994).

Unveiling the prevalence of information strategies employed by organizations to influence policy was Aplin and Hegarty (1980). Research by Aplin and Hegarty was considered groundbreaking work in the public affairs field (Griffin, 2005). Aplin and Hegarty argued little research had addressed the responses businesses employ to emerging public policy. In investigating the perspectives from those influenced by organizations (congressional staff), results from the mixed methods study suggested organizations use a relatively limited quiver of strategies to shape policy. Amongst the strategies in the quiver, providing information was the most widely used political influence approach by groups, firms, and organizations as a means to shape policy (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980).

Seminal work published by Aplin and Hegarty (1980) produced follow-up exploration. Barron (2013), Birnbaum (1985), Bouwen (2002), Hillman and Hitt (1999), Sonnenfeld (1984), and Taminiau and Wilts (2006) affirmed the prevalence of information strategies as initially argued by Aplin and Hegarty. In case studies, Sonnenfeld (1984) acknowledged information strategies and argued firms consistently gathering information and responded were more effective in the policymaking process. Birnbaum (1985) applied Aplin and Hegarty's findings to collect survey data from manufacturing firms, revealing the positive perception of information strategies compared to other methods of influence. More recently, studying private firms during the European financial crisis, Barron (2013) found information strategies were predominantly

used for responding directly to knowledge gaps in lawmakers, a perceived practical method for influencing policymakers.

Although several authors acknowledged and affirmed the work by Aplin and Hegarty (1980), Hillman and Hitt (1999) revisited the topic. Using grounded theory, Hillman and Hitt (1999) refined Aplin and Hegarty's work by developing a taxonomy of political strategies organizations and businesses use for engaging in political behavior. At the helm of their model is the information strategy intended to target policymakers with direct information via lobbying, research projects, testifying as an expert witness, and supplying position papers. Hillman and Hitt argued the outcome was to develop a practical base for public affairs managers to navigate the policymaking process, and provide a foundation for further research on each strategy of the taxonomy. Even though Hillman and Hitt sought to refine the variety of influence actions in public affairs, the prevalence of information strategies remained as a significant component of their taxonomy.

While the importance and preponderance of providing information in public affairs as an influential strategy are supported by scholars, what about the subsistence of the information? Other scholars argued more research is necessary to understand the nature of providing reliable, credible, and quality information to gain and maintain political access (Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Schuler et al., 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). In developing an exchange concept model, Dahan (2005) suggested knowledge is a primary resource towards a strategy of interaction, gained from various areas within the organization including technical expertise, economics, management, social,

environmental, and legal. Dahan argued firms responding with expertise, such as complex and technical knowledge to policymakers have the most impact on the process, especially with information directed towards civil servants. If public affairs are responsible for monitoring the external environment, potentially managing numerous policy issues, where and how do they obtain knowledge and expertise to provide quality and credible information?

Guaranteed access to policymakers isn't simply a product of providing information. Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer (2002) argued that access to lawmakers precedes any influence. If firms develop and execute a process to deliver reliable information to lawmakers, the more likely they will gain and maintain critical access (Schuler et al., 2002). In publishing a supply-demand theoretical framework, Bouwen (2002) called the delivery of quality information access goods. Organizational reputation and legitimacy are positively impacted based on providing consistent, high-quality access goods to contribute to public decision-making, including providing expert knowledge (Bouwen, 2002). Fleisher (2000) and Taminiau and Wilts (2006) agreed, arguing the effectiveness of entry or access points will depend on providing high quality, credible information and knowledge. Even further, Barron (2013) acknowledged the prevalent use of information strategies for accessibility to lawmakers as a common thread from his grounded theory research on European Union firms. Thus, a link exists between providing quality, credible, and consistent information by an organization with access to policymakers. This relationship provides support for the need for public affairs to deliver quality products (information) externally. However, the question remains on how the

ambiguous role of public affairs manages information strategies internally to produce quality information?

In sum, the literature suggests providing information is a commonly used influence strategy by organizations. Published as a practitioner paper in the inaugural edition of the *Journal of Public Affairs*, Fleisher (2000) challenged public affairs professionals to recognize political influence as no longer about providing financial resources, but on delivering information and knowledge to add value to the policymaking process. In doing so, public affairs professionals may offer a variety of products to policymakers that represent information for the purposes of contributing to the policymaking process.

Extension to noncurrent literature brought recurring questions and suggestions for further research. Both Aplin and Hegarty (1980), and Hillman and Hitt (1999) suggested further inquiry is needed on the tactics within the quiver of public affairs strategies, including the use of provided information. Hillman and Hitt specifically asked how should political strategies be employed once a firm decides to be politically engaged? Thus, the critical question remains unanswered: how do public affairs and organizations actually function internally to engage nonpublic affairs professionals and produce information to policymakers?

Integrating the public affairs information strategy with internal structures, processes, and practices. As illustrated in the previous section, the public affairs influence strategy of delivering information to policymakers is widely recognized in the literature. In attempting to seek insight into understanding how entities develop and

produce information to policymakers, this section focuses on the intraorganizational or ‘intrafirm’ features of public affairs. This section follows Hofstee’s (2006) funnel method, organized more broadly at the forefront of institutional level research in public affairs and corporate political activity, then progressively transitions to more narrow literature. Structural elements, processes, and practices are described, along with illustrating the barriers to effective practice. The section culminates with the limited research that exists, directly linking information strategy to internal structures and processes, and concludes with presenting questions not answered by existing research.

Literature on public affairs and corporate political activities have been predominantly published in management journals. Broadly, scholarship on public affairs and corporate political activities in the political science field have focused on industries, while the management literature has honed in on organizations (Schuler & Rehbein, 1997). Martin (1995) argued the importance of corporate political activity research at the institutional level based on survey findings from corporations during the national healthcare reform efforts of the President Clinton Administration. Schuler (1999) affirmed Martin’s argument in his study published in the inaugural edition of the *Business and Politics* journal. Schuler suggested that organizational factors, such as structure and process are critical to understanding corporate political action. Schuler and Rehbein (1997) called this the filtering role—the organizational structure, resources, and stakeholders impacting the extent of political involvement and interaction. Yet Schuler suggested that additional research is needed to understand the internal processes of firms at the micro-level related to political engagement activities, echoed later by Griffin and

Dunn (2004), and more recently by Boddewyn (2012). Thus, scholars have provided support for the level of inquiry in this research, including notations of limited and unaddressed research gaps.

Researchers have indicated the importance of institutional-level inquiry regarding organizational political activities. Existing studies on organizational level characteristics of public affairs and corporate political activities have focused on firm size, dependency, slack, diversification level, foreign ownership, age, formalized structures, and influence of corporate management (Hillman et al., 2004). Skippari (2005) argued that much of the existing literature asked questions of why a firm decides to enter the political arena, and what types of businesses and organizations become politically active. Despite research at the firm-level, Skippari noted that only a few studies have gone further and analyzed intraorganizational aspects of corporate political activities. Hillman, Keim and Schuler (2004) and Schuler and Rehbein (1997) also noted the little attention drawn towards how to organize to implement strategies to understand structures, processes, practices and procedures for formulating and implementing effective corporate political activities.

Limited focus exists on intraorganizational aspects of public affairs. The limitation prevails despite the widely held argument suggesting organizations should manage and coordinate their internal resources of public affairs activities (Baron, 1995; Baron, 1999; Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Sonnenfeld, 1984; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). Schuler and Rehbein (1997) and Bigelow et al. (1997) argued that challenges persist, and literature has not analyzed the dynamics of organizational practices, structures or resources on the formulation and implementation of political activities. Thus, from a

strategic perspective, research argued the need for organizations to integrate market and nonmarket strategies, but yet gaps remain to answer the design elements—the how question.

Despite the gap, some research provided a small level of insight into the intraorganizational management, role, and function of public affairs. Through case studies, Post et al. (1983) argued that there are no consistent findings directing a right way to internally structure a public affairs function in organizations. Some sectors, Post et al. noted, have sophisticated models of government relations but primarily remain uneven across economic sectors. The unevenness is echoed by Schuler (1996), who suggested that due to process imperfections of information flows, decision-making, and goal setting, firm-level political strategies will likely be diverse. In addition, Post et al. implied that public affairs are most influential internally when sociopolitical issues have near-term implications for management. Near-term implications may be an immediate threat or opportunity, and a response to the external environment is immediate, necessary, and impactful. Additionally, patterns from the case studies point to increased internal influence in centrally organized companies, and those with long-term strategic planning (Post et al., 1983).

Like Post et al. (1983), Griffin and Dunn (2004) argued there is not a widely accepted manner to structure a public affairs function. Using institutional and resource dependency theories, the authors administered a survey to determine the relationship between senior level support and resources allocated to public affairs. Findings from the survey suggested a strong positive association between top leadership commitment to

public affairs, and organizational resource allocation to the public affairs function. Griffin and Dunn also found conflicting results in their hypotheses regarding structural aspects to public affairs, suggesting the lack of a universal structure aligning with Post et al. The authors also proposed further areas of research, including inquiry on internal communication and information flow. However, insight into the internal coordination of public affairs and managers in managing issues was not further explored. Although the study provided support for corporate resource dependency, Griffin and Dunn's research was limited to resource levels and did not probe greater depth in public affairs processes and practices.

Although there does not seem to be a known universal method to structure public affairs, the intraorganizational influence of public affairs appears to be related to external responsiveness. Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988) developed their study on the basis of a lack of theory of internal organizational structure in public affairs. They researched the linkage between the intraorganizational structuring of public affairs and their responsiveness to the policy and political environment in the forest products and the insurance industries. Like Post's et al. (1983) findings on internal influence, Bhambri and Sonnenfeld's research analyzed responsiveness, assimilation, and importance of public affairs information. In building their study, the authors claimed poorly designed internal structures in organizations may exacerbate problems due to their inability to understand and respond to public affairs issues. Bhambri and Sonnenfeld concluded the existence of an alignment of internal organizational structures of public affairs and perceived external social responsiveness for managing external issues. From this study, empirical insight

was generated on internal influence and characteristics of public affairs, including information receptivity and information integration. However, their insight was limited to forest products and insurance industries and focused on what was happening (or not happening). The authors did not further elaborate how public affairs built on internal structures to provide information to external decision makers.

Previously noted, evidence suggests there is not a universal way to structure public affairs. However, scholars indicated the importance for public affairs professionals to manage available internal resources for information strategies. Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988), Taminiau and Wilts (2006), and Sonnenfeld (1984) asserted the importance of organizations establishing, managing, and coordinating an internal resource base for public affairs to leverage and obtain specific knowledge and expertise. Taminiau and Wilts developed and analyzed a model to provide a glimpse of a relationship between the public affairs information strategy and intraorganizational management. Focusing on public affairs activities in the European Union, the authors argued firm-to-policymaker interactions can help establish trust and facilitate the exchange of knowledge, which is crucial to public decision-making. While Bouwen (2002) outlined the structural features of organizations impacting the efficiency of providing knowledge to policymakers, Taminiau and Wilts generally suggested that firms need to manage their internal resources to assist in providing knowledge to public affairs. Both Bouwen, and Taminiau and Wilts argued that the effectiveness of entry or access points to policymakers will depend on providing high quality, credible information, and knowledge. To carry out this tactic, Bhambri and Sonnenfeld asserted this “required a

constant coordination of functional expertise in such areas as law, communications, and operations” (p. 644). While Taminiou and Wilts posited that management of internal resources is necessary for providing information, knowledge, and contributing to the policymaking process, they did not provide additional insight into how management is accomplished.

Institutional barriers inhibit the coordination and management process of information strategies. This process may be negatively impacted by organizational conflict, complexity, and a generally peripheral view by organizations of the public affairs function (Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Bouwen, 2002; Shaffer, 1995; Shaffer & Hillman, 2000). Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988), and Bouwen (2002) suggested that poorly designed structures and organizational decision-making process complexity inhibit efficiencies in providing information to policymakers. The more complicated and layered, Bouwen argued, the slower and less flexible an organization is with an opportunity to supply information and knowledge to lawmakers. Intraorganizational structuring of public affairs, such as hierarchical (bureaucratic) versus democratic models may impact the efficiency of public affairs to gather internal knowledge for use in policymaking (Bouwen, 2002).

In relation to internal structural and process problems and barriers, Shaffer and Hillman (2000) studied intraorganizational conflict. In conducting their case study, the authors asked why conflict occurs, what types of conflict happen, and conflict resolution techniques. Shaffer and Hillman found conflict related to the distribution of costs/benefits, the position of the organization in advocacy, and clarity on who represents

the organization to policymakers. The authors concluded that the greater complexity of a firm related to the likelihood of conflict in the management of public policy issues. Like Boddewyn (2012), Shaffer (1995), and Shaffer and Hillman (2000), noted the incompleteness of research on processes of decision-making on various aspects of public affairs, including the integration of issues, advocacy positions, and representation.

In acknowledging the dearth of research on intraorganizational implications of corporate political strategies, Skippari (2005) employed a different approach. In a single case study, Skippari focused on corporate political strategy change over time in a Finnish industrial conglomerate. Acknowledging complexity in political strategies in multidivisional firms, findings provided evidence to suggest longitudinal change is a product of factors related to internal resources and the external environment. Skippari suggested additional research is necessary on political strategies across different sectors, along with varying intraorganizational environments.

In terms of research needed throughout various sectors, there is hardly any attention allotted to relevant studies conducted within healthcare delivery organizations. Bigelow et al. (1997), and Cook, Shortell, Conrad, and Morrissey (1983) provide limited insight into public affairs-related activities in hospitals. In analyzing corporate political strategies, Bigelow et al. argued the environment in which hospitals operate is highly politicized, due to hospitals' role in the community of providing a public service. Unlike most private for-profit firms, all constituents in a community are potentially consumers of medical care services, and thus subject to scrutiny (Bigelow et al., 1997). Similarly, Cook et al. (1983) developed a theory of regulatory response in hospitals. Noting the regulatory

nature hospitals are subjected to, Cook et al. provided insight into the operational response to regulation at the institutional, managerial, and technical levels. Bigelow et al. suggested the need for corporate political strategies to engage with policy issues throughout the policymaking cycle. In addition, some of the findings by Cook et al. pointed towards a needed hospital public affairs function and role, such as expanding community relations and serving on agency committees as a means to address regulatory issues. However, the theory developed by Cook et al. focused on the operational implementation of regulations and made no mention of using resources to influence proposed policy and regulation.

Narrower than the institutional level, Fleisher (2002) provided perspectives on tasks of public affairs professionals. As a practitioner publication, Fleisher argued that issues exist on the intraorganizational exchange of analytical information. Fleisher (2002) suggested that internal nonpublic affairs managers (stakeholders) that receive analyzed information from public affairs do not have a strategy on how to react to such information. The author indicated that unfortunately organizations have decision makers unable to understand nor act on public affairs analyses and recommendations. This problem may be due to their lack of education and familiarity with the public affairs field. Burrell (2012) added to Fleisher (2002) in a non-empirical commentary suggesting that the availability of information makes a public affairs professional more important toward adding organizational value. Strategically, this incorporates analyzing information, offering insights and advice to nonpublic affairs professionals on decisions and actions (Burrell, 2012).

Perhaps the most in-depth research published on firm-level internal nuances of public affairs related to the information strategy were case studies on the forest products industry conducted by Sonnenfeld (1984). Focused on structure and culture, Sonnenfeld argued that public affairs responsibilities generally reflected a complex mosaic. However, some firms were more effective in executing information strategies based on their internal processes for obtaining information and responding to policymakers. In practice, public affairs may establish a consistent mechanism for coordinating intraorganizational experts to assist in piecing together knowledge and information to utilize externally, which may be temporary task forces or steering committees. Sonnenfeld concluded the study by arguing the absolute importance of public affairs in preparing organizations internally to respond to issues externally is: (a) through the use of designated public affairs professionals, (b) internally coordinated experts, and (c) internal influence of public affairs. Much can be applauded by the depth, insight, and tactics gained from Sonnenfeld. Nonetheless, lingering questions were left unanswered that step deeper into the practices and processes of public affairs engaging with internal nonpublic affairs professionals to solicit, obtain, and use expertise to respond externally.

In sum, this section provided a synthesis of literature related to public affairs and corporate political activity with internal structures, processes, and practices. The literature suggested the importance of studying firm-level dynamics in political activities and the importance of organizations integrating market and nonmarket strategies. However, challenges remain with organizing public affairs. There is not a best practice on how to structure the organizational function. Yet, it is critical to establish, manage,

and coordinate an internal resource base to obtain knowledge and expertise to use in providing information externally. Although the internal influence of public affairs is positively associated with resource dependency of near-term implications, complexity, and poorly designed structures appear linked to inefficiency. Organizational and management challenges remain, and research on the integration of intraorganizational functions, practices, and processes of managing nonmarket strategies of public affairs is incomplete.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the review of literature germane to the research topic. The chapter commenced with an outline on conducting the literature review, including the illustration of database search strategies, focus, goal, and organization. Next, I presented the qualitative conceptual framework as a diagram, visually connecting the key aspects of the study followed with a detailed description of each component. The review of literature followed, organized and presented aligning with the core concepts in the study's conceptual framework: intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices of providing information as a strategy of influence. Divided into sub-sections, current research literature was presented, which contained a very limited set of relevant articles. However, the gap in the research literature was identified from current articles in public affairs providing the basis of the inquiry. Given the very limited set of current research, I expanded the review of literature beyond current scholarship. The aim of this approach recognizes the young nature of public affairs as an academic discipline and provides a stronger foundation for the study than what was presented as a gap in current research.

Additional insight was generated from noncurrent literature, linking the pieces of the conceptual framework than what otherwise would not have been possible. Although insight provided in noncurrent literature helped create a more complete depiction of the study's relationships, there remains notable gaps to which this study attempts to address.

From reviewing current and noncurrent research literature, a number of themes emerged. First, in public affairs practice, a common and useful strategy of influence is to provide information to policymakers. This connected to the conceptual framework as the end product delivered externally as part of the public decision-making process. Second, research suggested the importance of public affairs to manage internal resources and engage with nonpublic affairs experts to assist in crafting information strategies. However, this process is unclear, and may be inhibited by organizational complexity. Finally, scholars have suggested gaps in research exist on the intraorganizational implications of public affairs, the dynamics of internal public affairs information flow and decision-making processes.

Topics remain yet to be explored scientifically. The two primary questions presented in the conceptual framework are unanswered, represented as a black box: How do public affairs interact with internal (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders, and what intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices exist to provide information and knowledge to policymakers? For example, research attributed to the importance of managing an internal resource base for leveraging expertise in providing information, but there lacks any evidence on how this management is done. Additionally, an internal barrier to efficiency seemed to be structural and process complexity, but what more can

be learned about this from public affairs professionals in healthcare delivery organizations. No articles in public affairs have explored the depth of these questions, and a paucity of relevant articles have focused on healthcare delivery organizations. The aim of this study addresses these gaps.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the intraorganizational structure, processes, and practices of public affairs in providing information as a strategy of influence. Through an organizational function focusing on nonmarket dynamics, public affairs often engage internally with organizational experts to develop an external response to proposed public policy. However, this process was not well understood. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the management and public affairs literature provided only very limited insight into the research problem. In following the review of the literature, Chapter 3 outlines and describes the research design and method for this qualitative study and includes the elements specific to case study protocol (Yin, 2013).

Chapter 3 commences with illustrating and supporting the selected research design. The research questions lead readers to a qualitative paradigm, and more specifically to use of a case study design. Next, the role of the researcher is described. In qualitative methods, the researcher role is translated into the instrument, immersed in the study. Third, the methodology is presented in depth. Following case study design, the following is included in the methods section: case sites, sample, participants, procedures, recruitment, data collection, instrumentation, size, and data analysis plan. Fourth, the chapter explains strategies that established and maintained research credibility. Finally, plans that protected human subjects, along with preventing and minimizing potential ethical issues are illustrated before culminating with a chapter summary and conclusion.

Research Design and Approach

Through a qualitative paradigm, a collective case study design was used for this study. Data were generated inductively in natural settings, immersing me as an interactive, subjective actor seeking meaning to phenomena (Carr, 1994; Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Within qualitative inquiry, I employed a case study design to probe a current situation as a bounded system by generating in-depth data from multiple sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Using a case study design followed a philosophical underpinning of constructivism, emphasizing the importance of social human interaction and perception (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The primary research question provided support for the selected paradigm and design. First, the central question aligned with qualitative inquiry by probing to understand how something works. Second, the core research question was open-ended, inductive-oriented, and non-directional (Creswell, 2013). Third, the exploratory nature of the primary research question did not link with rigorous quantitative methods often hallmarked by statistical analyses of relationships, variable isolation, objectivism, predictions, and cause-effect dynamics (Golafshani, 2003; Laws & McLeod, 2004).

In addition to using a qualitative approach, the central inquiry aligned and focused on a process, associated with case study design (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2013). In this study, how public affairs operate intraorganizationally to develop and deliver information externally, coordinated with a process-based research orientation. Also, the central phenomenon under investigation was a contemporary, real-life issue

(Yin, 2013) facing the public affairs field, defined with the parameters of the conceptual framework illustrated in Chapter 2.

Within qualitative case studies, different design options exist. The focus of this research was to understand a particular function within a healthcare delivery organization as the unit of analysis. Although healthcare delivery organizations were the sites of the research, participants were public affairs professionals and intraorganizational stakeholders that interacted with public affairs. The unit of analysis was at the organizational level, but were more specifically embedded units such as public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders (Yin, 2013). Second, the goal of the study was to understand how a process and interaction occurred and not the specific case itself. Understanding a process aligns with an instrumental approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Finally, the study was conducted in more than a single site, following a multiple or collective case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013). Together, this study was oriented as an instrumental embedded multiple-case design (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013).

Selecting more than one case for this study mimicked the general design of a multiple experiment. Known as replication logic, each case is considered as a separate, smaller study and unit within the current, real-world context (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2013). In addition, given the use of a relatively limited number of cases, a literal replication was conducted to generate similar results from the homogeneously selected case sites (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2013).

Following the criterion-based approach to selecting similar (typical) cases and applying the same research design principles to each case aligned with the use of replication logic.

Research Questions

At the core, the purpose of the research question and subquestions explained what the study answered (Maxwell, 2013). Yin (2013) argued the central research question is the first condition in selecting a specific research design. Also, Creswell (2013) suggested a series a subquestions should follow the central question to provide greater specificity, depth and probing capabilities. In aligning with qualitative case study research, existing literature gaps, and the conceptual framework, the central research questions were: How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Role of the Researcher

The purpose of this section describes the role of the researcher. In qualitative inquiry, to obtain depth and meaning the researcher immersed in data collection and analysis. The subjective nature of researcher interaction also introduced the possibility of

bias. Controlling bias was critical for maintaining data integrity through measures of research quality. Specifically, I noted potential conflicts of interest, steps employed to maintain research quality, and overall bias minimization.

The case study design followed the qualitative paradigm and presented opportunities to be an active participant in the research. In assuming the role of a participant, I conducted the majority of data collection on-site. The benefits of on-site work allowed me to meet and interact with research participants face-to-face. My goal was to establish a collegial partnership between myself as the researcher and participants. I did not assume an observer role because behavioral interactions were not part of the study.

As a participant in the research, there were occasions for introducing subjectivity and bias. The design of this research stemmed from a practitioner problem faced being employed in public affairs at a healthcare delivery organization. Through the interaction with colleagues, I learned the general research problem was shared across different healthcare organizations. This led to topic exploration and consultation of relevant literature outlined in Chapter 2. Site access is often a challenge in case study research. Developing relationships with gatekeepers through my professional work helped to build support for accessing organizations. It is also important to note I did not study the organization of my current employment.

The relationships I had with some of the research participants were as professional colleagues. Networking with other professionals was proven to be instrumental in the development of this study and I did not let my professional

relationships compromise the study. To minimize bias and accomplish my role as a researcher, specific tactics were: (a) clearly communicated (verbally and written) my role as a doctoral student completing a dissertation; (b) entrust that all data remained strictly confidential; (c) ensured any notations to individuals were masked and private; and (d) maintained a researcher journal throughout the study. The outcome of the research answered lingering questions and problems in public affairs practice.

Methodology

The purpose of this section describes and illustrates the study's methodology. Within the qualitative paradigm, a multiple case study was used to answer the research questions and problem. Through purposeful sampling, healthcare delivery organizations served as the study's unit of analysis. As the defined cases, healthcare delivery organizations were selected based on established criteria. Participants were public affairs professionals and nonpublic affairs intraorganizational stakeholders. I was the data collection instrument. Site visits included multiple sources of data, deriving a rich, thick data description. Collected data were analyzed in a comparative, cross-case manner aided with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Procedures for ensuring research quality conclude this section.

Participants and Sampling

A number of factors were considered for justifying and selecting a specific qualitative sampling strategy. Case sites, size, and goals are factors implicating a sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). In addition, Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000) suggested a sampling strategy should be ethical, feasible, relevant,

information-rich, enhance analytical generalizability, and provide believable explanations. Guiding the study's participants and sampling procedures, the following strategies were used: purposeful sampling, criterion-based selection, and sample size.

Otherwise known as judgment sampling (Marshall, 1996), purposeful sampling guided the selection of cases for this study. Patton (2002) noted sampling procedures fundamentally differs between qualitative and quantitative research. Whereas quantitative pursues randomization and large samples, purposeful sampling yields advantages as information-rich and may be as small as a single unit (Higginbottom, 2004; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2013; Patton, 2002). The outcome of the collective case study was an in-depth understanding of complex dynamics in healthcare delivery organizations related to the work of public affairs. A large, random sample was not possible nor practical to gain the level of depth sought in the study.

Following the foundation of a purposeful sampling approach, criterion strategy was used to guide the selection of case sites and participants. Criterion sampling is a strategy, setting boundaries and parameters that all cases met for inclusion in the study (Patton, 2002). In addition, criteria employed for this study aligned with the conceptual framework depicted in the previous chapter. The first set of sampling criteria was case sites must be a healthcare delivery organization, the unit of analysis. Second, the healthcare delivery organization needed to have a public affairs function. Organizations may have defined their specific public affairs function as external affairs, government affairs, legal affairs, government relations, or external relations. However referenced, organizations must have had a designated function that maintains external legitimacy

through the interaction with the nonmarket environment. Finally, healthcare delivery organizations with a public affairs function were headquartered in the upper Midwest region of the United States. This final parameter was for practicality purposes, helping to maintain a reasonable level of research expenditures in traveling to case sites.

The next step in following a purposeful sampling approach was to select and support a sample size. A common question in qualitative research, sample sizes may be as small as a single unit ($n = 1$) (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2013), Rowley (2002), and Yin (2013) advised against a single site in case study inquiry unless the researcher provided strong support. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) argued multiple case studies strengthen research by adding confidence, and suggest five cases as a strong sample. However, Darke, Shanks, and Broadbent (1998) argued against an ideal sample size in collective case studies. Creswell (2013) agreed with Miles et al. (2014) on applying a multiple approach in case study research, but for practical purposes recommends not exceeding four to five cases. Creswell (2013) argued the depth in each case treated as an independent study may be compromised in the pursuit of generalization with a substantial number of cases. Balancing compelling scientific inquiry with practicality, and recommendations from research design scholars, this collective case study was three ($n = 3$).

Obtaining access to a case site(s) may be a challenge to conducting qualitative case study research. Access to participants and potentially sensitive information may be a barrier to achieving an ideal collective case site sample. However, access difficulties were minimized by building strong professional reputation, relationship, and trust. In

addition, to obtain the interest of potential case sites, Darke et al. (1998) suggested the research topic, questions, benefits, and outcomes need to be of interest and relevant to participants. Such elements aligned with the underlying approach of using case study as a research design on real life experiences and current issues.

The general research concept was informally discussed and planted with several public affairs colleagues to gauge the initial interest and merit of the topic. Upon receiving informal positive feedback, communication was established to determine organizational interest as a case site and on the process for approval. The positive feedback led to confidence in the ability to obtain at least three case study sites for this research. For this study, I relied extensively on a professional network of colleagues in the public affairs field to assume the role as gatekeepers for their respective organizations. Maintaining the relationships with gatekeepers was critical for me to access case study research (Maxwell, 2013).

Gaining access to case sites is a fundamental design decision (Maxwell, 2013) and used a two-step process. First, a letter of introduction served as the starting point of dialog regarding the formal request. The letter included the core aspects of the study: overview, mission, goals, purpose, questions, and outcomes (Yin, 2013). This step represented the first part of Yin's (2013) case study protocol. In delivering this communication, initial contact was established with the gatekeeper (public affairs professional colleague) to commence the organizational approval process. The gatekeeper, acting on my behalf, forwarded the request to the organizational decision maker for review.

The second step was the formalized approval. As healthcare delivery organizations served as the case sites, some required consultation with their own Institutional Review Board (IRB). Data were not collected until both Walden University and the case site designee or IRB's issued approval. Approval in two of the three case sites was made by an executive or his/her designee with a letter. The final case site required formal IRB approval at the organization, lengthening the time to process the research application and conduct the study. Following approval, intraorganizational stakeholders were identified as potential participants with assistance of the initial gatekeeper as the primary source of participant identification. This dialog represented ongoing relationship management between my role as the researcher and gatekeeper that is necessary to conduct case study research (Maxwell, 2013). As Darke et al. (1998) noted, adequate preparation was necessary prior to site visits to ensure sufficient resources are allocated and an understanding was clearly communicated of their value in participation to the organization and research.

In sum, the sampling strategy for this study followed qualitative research using a purposeful, criterion-based approach. The strategy aligned with the recommendations and guidance of Curtis et al. (2000). First, the strategy coordinated with the conceptual framework and research questions, seeking an understanding to intraorganizational dynamics of public affairs information strategies in healthcare delivery organizations. Second, the sample size was sufficient to unveil meaningful data to understand the phenomena. Next, a multiple case approach followed recommendations to generate a rich, thick data description to enhance the opportunity for analytic generalization. Fourth,

selected sites were current healthcare delivery organizations and data collected from healthcare professionals supported real-life applicability of findings. Also, the sample selection was ethical, did not use the author's organization as a site, and followed all guidance of the Walden University IRB and healthcare organizations parameters. Finally, the sample size was feasible, and balanced scientific guidance with practicality both in geography and in the number of case sites.

Instrumentation and Sources of Data

In qualitative studies, the researcher assumes the role as the instrument in data collection and interpretation (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). As the source of data collection, the researcher often develops a series of study-specific open-ended questions aimed at inductively probing the topic (Chenail, 2011). Data collection in qualitative case studies are usually derived from multiple sources by a variety of tactics developed by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). Sources of data for this study were all part of Yin's (2013) recommendations of case study evidence: interviews, documents, and archival/public records.

Interviewing. The primary source of data for this case study was in-person, one-on-one interviewing. Interviewing is considered the most important data source in case study protocol, allowing for direct focus on research questions through the perspectives of participants (Yin, 2013). There are several different techniques available to administer interviews (Patton, 2002). The interview protocol, or guide, helped set a process and checklist. The protocol ensured topics were sufficiently addressed and may be very structured and standardized, to completely informal and open (Creswell, 2013; Patton,

2002). For this study, a general interview guide approach was used (Patton, 2002). The interview guide provided the issues and topics compiled from the research questions and conceptual framework. However, the guide did not list all the individual interview questions sequentially as in a structured, standardized open-ended interview. This balanced the opportunity to ask and probe subject areas, but was structured to ensure all critical topics were covered (Patton, 2002).

As reflected in the conceptual framework, the study focused on the interaction of public affairs and nonpublic affairs members of the organization. Given the broad differences in the role within healthcare delivery organizations, two different interview protocols were used: Appendix B for public affairs and Appendix C for nonpublic affairs participants. As described previously in Chapter 2, different terminology existed for defining the public affairs function (government affairs, government relations, external affairs, etc.). To maintain continuity of the healthcare delivery organization terminology, the terms used in the interview guide denoted public affairs were substituted based on the organizational role nomenclature. For example, if an organization denoted government affairs or external affairs to describe the function, such terms were used in the interview protocol instead of public affairs to ensure consistency and minimize confusion to the participant. Using Creswell (2013) and Patton (2002), Appendix B and Appendix C depicted the interview protocols for the study.

Documentation. Documentation was also obtained as case study evidence to support the research questions. The strengths of documentation are stability for reviewing, broadness, and level of specificity (Yin, 2013). Documents obtained included

organizational structure charts, email communication/interaction, strategy discussion, decision-making, and policy/data analyses. Documents supported understanding interaction within organizations between public and nonpublic affairs personnel. However, there were issues with accessing a broad range of documentation (Yin, 2013) that would have been helpful as evidence, but nonetheless sensitive to the organization to distribute. The volume of documentation received was appropriate and assisted data analysis, but as reflected in journal entries, participants seemed to be apprehensive about readily sharing.

Intraorganizational documentation was suitable to address most of the research questions. Understanding the organizational structure of public affairs, information flows, decision-making protocol, and engagement between public affairs and nonpublic affairs personnel was aided by available corporate documentation. In addition, interview notes and a journal were also included as researcher-generated data that assisted with illuminating additional insight into the interviews and general case study experiences. Due to sensitivity regarding potential intraorganizational barriers and challenges to engagement on public policy issues between public affairs and internal stakeholders, documentation reflecting these problems aligning with this particular research question were absent. Documents were reviewed with an established protocol (Appendix E) for data analysis.

Archival Records. The final source providing supportive data were archival records. Much like documentation, archival records provided strength in stability, specificity, and potential broadness (Yin, 2013). But for this study, archived documents

intended for use were available in the public domain via the Federal Register through the regulations.gov website. The study sought to understand the processes by which an external comment, letter, or message (information) was transferred to policymakers. Information products submitted in response to federal administrative rulemaking are generally available to the public through the regulations website. This supportive piece of evidence provided a linkage from the internal processes to an external output. The specificity, scope, and depth of the public comment may be traced back to the strengths and issues of the process. Public records were analyzed (Appendix D) as supportive evidence linking to the sub-research question focusing on how nonpublic affairs knowledge is used in providing information (output) to policymakers. However, the specific elements to the public records that employed nonpublic affairs stakeholder knowledge were implied, and not specifically annotated. For example, a letter providing input on a proposed rule generated from public affairs did not distinguish which elements of the letter were public affairs or nonpublic affairs knowledge. This connection was implied.

Data Collection Procedures

This section outlines data collection procedures. Primary data collection was conducted at the selected case sites. Through purposeful, criterion-based sampling, the case sites for this study were healthcare delivery organizations, defined in the preceding chapter. With a sample size of three locations and in a defined geographic region of the U.S., case sites were sufficiently masked to ensure confidentiality. The location of

organizations in the upper Midwest offers a practical approach to minimizing distance and travel costs.

A single visit was conducted for each case site. The site visit enabled the collection of case study data through in-person interviews and obtain relevant documentation. The duration of the single visit did not exceed three consecutive business days during regular office hours from 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday. Arrangements beyond the standard business hours were not necessary, but scheduling changes by participants did prompt a few modifications. Dedicated site visit days consecutively allowed for complete immersion in the study and immediate reflection with memos and journal entries. In recognizing research is considered an intrusion on research participants (Maxwell, 2013), site visits longer than four business days may have introduced excessive imposition, and a site visit too short may have compromised the ability to obtain a rich, thick data set.

While conducting the site visits, all of the research questions were probed with interview data. Interviewees were selected through snowball sampling with the organizational gatekeeper. Organizational gatekeepers were professional colleagues in public affairs, who acted as liaisons between me and the case sites. At each case site, I was referred to an administrative professional to assist in reserving conference rooms. Interview schedules were arranged and scheduled prior to the site visit. Several participants also referred me to their administrative assistant to arrange available meeting times. Data were collected at each site visit, and no additional follow-up was necessary other than transcript checking procedures.

Recording and storage were critical to collecting and analyzing case study data. With permission, in-person interviews were audio recorded using a SONY ICD-P520 digital recorder, which allowed for easy playback, upload and transfer of electronic audio files (mp3, WAV, etc.) for electronic storage. Remote interviews via telephone were recorded via Android Automatic Call Recorder Application. Interviewees refusing recording were documented as best as possible through note taking. To produce a clean document for analysis and member checking, interviews were transcribed in a condensed fashion, purposefully omitting irrelevant filler words, phrase repetition, and pauses (Carlson, 2010). Follow-up interviews were not necessary. Notes were taken by the interviewee during the process that helped guide further questioning and provided a supplementary source of data.

Protecting the confidentiality of data maintained research security and integrity. Throughout the data collection process, I maintained a password-protected electronic file storage medium. Sources of data via email were immediately downloaded as a word or pdf document and saved to the research database. A primary source of a file database is a password-protected computer hard drive, backed up by an external, portable storage media, known as a flash drive. Paper documents and other sources of hard data were kept secured, electronically scanned and saved in a similar manner for data analysis. Originals (hard copies) were kept and retained in a designated, locked storage cabinet.

Procedures for participants exiting the study occurred in a series of steps. First, participants were acknowledged with gratitude for their time and participation in the research. An expression of thanks indicated their primary role in the study was fulfilled

with an understanding additional follow-up might have been necessary to minimize any response confusion or discrepancies. Next, departing the case site entirely represented primary data collection at the organization (unit of analysis) was completed. Third, participants were provided an opportunity to review their generated data through quality assurance steps detailed in the next section. Addressing any disagreements or receiving transcript edits were conducted during this phase. Finally, each participant was informed of the finished research product, and supplied with a summary of research findings.

Electronic copies of the entire dissertation were provided upon request.

Data Analysis Plan

Particularly for novices, qualitative data analysis is ambiguous and manages significant amounts of worded text (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002). There are no specific procedures or formula constituting proper data analysis, but general guidelines assisted in the process (Patton, 2002). The purpose of this section describes how data analysis was carried out.

In conducting qualitative case studies, Yin (2013) suggested researchers start with a general analytical strategy. Data analysis borrowed from grounded theory. Applying a ground up strategy approached the data inductively, setting aside existing theoretical propositions to establish connections within the data (Yin, 2013). A ground-up method was selected because the conceptual framework was reflective of unknown phenomena occurring in the public affairs field. Specifically, following the review of existing literature, the conceptual framework illustrated a black box which benefited from a grounded approach. As Yin (2013) noted, researchers with existing knowledge in their

field may benefit from this strategy. In this study, experiential knowledge aided in developing the research problem, questions, and conceptual framework.

The general approach to analyzing data represented a starting point. Next, an analytical framework further guided data analysis. This study mostly used a process-based analytical framework to describe and organize the data (Patton, 2002). Research questions involved the process of crafting information strategies between public affairs, intraorganizational stakeholders, and decision-making protocol aligned with using a process-based analytic framework. Research questions containing structural components of public affairs in healthcare delivery organizations were presented as a descriptive framework to provide a foundation for process-based questions (Yin, 2013). As such, the results section in Chapter 4 is presented as a structure, process, and outcome framework.

Using a ground-up approach and organizing data as a process-based framework, the next step was analysis. For this multiple case study, a cross-case analysis served as the underlying strategy. Cross-case analysis yielded strength in findings, deepened understanding and provided opportunity to assess themes, similarities, and differences between and across units (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Donaldson & Mohr, 2000; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). Performing cross-case synthesis was an iterative process (Donaldson & Mohr, 2000) and took form throughout the data collection and analysis portion of the study. When cross-case themes were not possible (divergence), comparisons were made appropriately to demonstrate the lack of continuity.

Within cross-case analysis, two strategies are common: case-oriented and variable-oriented (Miles et al., 2013). Cross-case synthesis practicing case-oriented

strategy first treats each case as an independent study (Donaldson & Mohr, 2001). This strategy was necessary to provide due diligence to each selected case (Patton, 2002). Then I moved to a comparative analysis at the embedded case site level. A variable-oriented approach sought themes cutting across the cases as the foci, rather than the cases themselves (Miles et al., 2014). As neither approach was superior to another (Donaldson & Mohr, 2002), Miles et al. (2014) recommended using a blended approach known as stacking. For this study, a mixed approach was used providing depth to each case as an individual unit through case site reports, but then generated themes that cut across cases. The emphasis, however, were on the patterns and themes that cross the selected case sites to develop an understanding of the research problem.

Cross-case analysis was assisted by documentation of researcher perspectives in tandem with data collection. Three specific techniques aided data collection and analysis: field notes, journaling, and memoing. Field notes captured immediate thoughts during interviews supporting the primary data collection strategy. Field notes may be informal as jotting thoughts during interviews to more formalized narratives and considered a core feature of case study databases (Yin, 2013). Field notes were generated in paper format and transposed to an electronic document at the conclusion of the interview (if time allotted) or following the day spent on site. Yin (2013) suggested much like data collection, field notes should be organized in a method that makes them readily accessible, and my field notes were categorized using the same method as transcripts. In some instances, participants refused audio recording, relying solely on notes for member checking and data analysis.

Concluding each day of a case site visit, crafting a journal entry provided an additional, supplemental segment of data. Journaling is a way for a researcher to express self-reflection, critical for a qualitative researcher assuming the role as the research instrument (Janesick, 1999). Creswell (2013) argued self-reflection can aid as a form of validation, and journaling can express insight with meaning and feeling when conducting qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Janesick, 2011). Janesick (1999) also suggested keeping and submitting a journal as a data artifact, helping to better understand participant responses, aid in establishing and maintaining quality assurance, and data triangulation. Hence, maintaining a written journal allowed me to collect and organize thoughts on the study, providing additional insight beyond the analysis of raw data. Much of my journaling provided data collection perspectives and technique improvement.

Separate of journaling is a tactic known as memoing (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Memoing is derived from grounded theory research and used for processing data and generating ideas (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2013). Maxwell (2013) argued memoing is a reliable technique for developing thoughts, theories and understanding of the data. Since the case study used a ground up approach to data collection, it was logical to borrow a data analysis strategy from grounded theory. This technique interacted with the data and was helpful for this study in compiling field notes, concepts and other thoughts during data analysis as a means of establishing patterns and themes. As with collecting other forms of data, organizing and keeping the memos sortable aided in data management and analysis (Miles et al., 2013).

Organizing the data into themes represented a specific ploy in data analysis. Establishing themes in data analysis required a consistent set of principles and guidance to categorize data, known as coding. Taking many forms, coding is an analytical technique that systematically assigns labels to chunks of qualitative data (Miles et al., 2014). Consistent and documented coding helped create a data chain of evidence. As the conceptual framework was presented as a black box and a general approach to data analysis using a ground up approach, this study employed open coding. Found in grounded theory, open coding approaches data without a set structure of codes but are developed and revised as data is analyzed (Maxwell, 2013). Some guidance and structure to preliminary data analysis was performed, aligning codes with categories of research questions (structures, processes, barriers, etc.).

Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) are tools available to assist the researcher in organizing, categorizing, and storing qualitative data (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). For this study, I used atlas.ti as a CAQDAS tool. After comparing other programs with atlas.ti, I was pleased with the ease of use, data interaction, categorization, coding, and report generation capabilities. As Miles et al. (2014) noted, CAQDAS does not supplant the importance of the researcher in conducting analysis, but provided a useful platform for managing large volumes of data, and aided in cross-case analysis in the collective study. The ability to carry-over codes from each case site was instrumental in conducting data analysis more efficiently.

In sum, data analysis followed a ground-up approach. This approach aligned with the conceptual framework which sought fulfillment of the black box phenomena

occurring in the public affairs field of practice in using intraorganizational knowledge to craft information strategies. Next, although the study probed some structural-based questions, the primary focus was understanding the existence and context of processes within healthcare delivery organizations as the analytical framework. Third, more than a single case site introduced cross-case analysis, strengthening case study research. Within cross-case synthesis, a stacked approach was used that first served justice to each case, but then focused on variable orientation across the cases. Next, cross-case analysis was aided by field notes, journaling, and memoing to provide additional support to the primary data. Finally, coding furnished the strategy for consistently assigning themes to masses of data, managed by a CAQDAS program for storage and retrieval ease.

Quality Assurance and Ethical Procedures

The purpose of this final section provides plans for quality assurance and ethical procedures. The first part outlines steps for addressing qualitative counterparts for validity and reliability. Qualitative equivalents for ensuring quality included measures to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Krefting, 1991). In addition, the section includes an explanation of ethical procedures in conducting research with human participants. Steps taken to gain institutional permission, IRB processes, data collection, and data storage are noted prior to summation and conclusion of the chapter.

Quality Assurance. Scholars have published assorted perspectives on standards and criteria for assessing quality in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Mays & Pope, 2000; Seale, 1999). Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999) argued against qualitative research assessed by the same standards and terminology as quantitative

paradigms. Nonetheless, rigor was critical to establishing quality and trustworthiness, often synonyms for validity and reliability (Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003). Applying Krefting (1991) and Miles et al. (2014), the following categories of research quality assurance were addressed in this study:

- *Credibility*. Adequate submersion into the data.
- *Transferability*. Larger importance in relation to other contexts.
- *Confirmability*. Researcher neutrality and reflexivity.
- *Dependability*. Consistency of findings.
- *Application*. Practical use of research findings to practitioners.

To deliver quality assurance strategies, specific tactics were followed, including: triangulation, thick description, member checking, journaling, case study database/audit trail, coding protocol, and the case study report. Table 1 at the conclusion of this section provides a summary of the quality assurance strategies, brief descriptions, and categories related to the study.

A standard quality assurance technique to enhance credibility in qualitative research is *triangulation* (Krefting, 1991). Triangulation is the means of collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources, methods, sites, or participants to strengthen qualitative findings (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Krefting, 1991; Maxwell, 2013; Mays & Pope, 2000; Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a key strategy for unveiling themes in qualitative research, crossing credibility, dependability, and confirmability quality assurance categories (Krefting, 1991). Thus, three specific

triangulation strategies were employed for this study: (a) multiple data sources, (b) multiple case sites, and (c) variety of participants.

An essential principle in conducting case study research is using multiple sources (Yin, 2013). As explained more specifically in the data collection section of this chapter, data sources included interviews, documentation, and archival/public records. The combination of sources provided cross-checking for enhanced findings within each case site (Patton, 2002). Next, use of the collective case study contributed to strengthened findings and confirmation by collecting evidence at more than one healthcare delivery organization. Finally, research participants across the selected case sites were partially provided by initial interviewees. Using interviewees generated a variety of research participants (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999) contributing to evidence from different levels and departmental functions within healthcare delivery organizations.

Collecting data at multiple sites, participants, and sources aided generating a rich, thick description of the case. Although qualitative research lacked the ability to statistically generalize findings, providing a rich, thick description of the case allowed readers to assess transferability to other settings (Miles et al., 2014). The case description provided sufficient detail for the ability to compare to other samples, and Chapter 5 suggests where findings could be further tested.

Respondent validation also supported credibility (Maxwell, 2013; Mays & Pope, 2000). Respondent validation increased the accuracy of data collected, allowing respondents to review their responses and provide feedback (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Participants were provided an opportunity to review their transcripts or interview

notes. Before the interview commenced, each participant was supplied details regarding the review process, and how their data was used in the study overall. As suggested by Carlson (2010), participants were provided some options for respondent validation. Tactics included providing optional documentation for members as a full or partially condensed transcript, analytical document, or both. Given the nature of participants in a professional setting, respondent validation was communicated via email between me and the participants. Sufficient time (2-3 weeks) was allotted to the participants to review and respond, and individual requests were accommodated as necessary.

Journaling was done as a transparency tool to document self-reflection. Journaling can be a way to document the personal interaction and bias of researchers, recognizing one's influence on the study (Carlson, 2010). I maintained and submitted a journal as case study evidence, helping to enhance the credibility and confirmability of research findings (Carlson, 2010; Janesick, 1999; Miles et al., 2014). Within journal writing, documenting thoughts of what went well and what could have been modified also aided the conduction of the study (Carlson, 2010).

Yin (2013) dedicated attention to maintaining a database and producing the case study report. The case study database and report interacted together; the databases stored the detailed information and data while the report provided analytical integration with specific citations to the raw and coded information housed in the database (Yin, 2013). Establishing dependability in following the audit trail (interaction of report and database), coding procedures were defined and consistent. The challenge in this study was using an open coding procedure that slightly morphed as data were collected. However, similar

terminology used from case site to another was collapsed and combined to form a cohesive set of cross-case codes illustrated in the appendix. Finally, using the information in the database, the case study report needed to have practical application (Miles et al., 2014). This provision of quality assurance needed to address the use of findings in practice. In this case study, the report illustrated how findings applied to healthcare delivery organizations and public affairs professionals that are useful and actionable.

Table 1

Summary of Quality Assurance strategies

Quality Assurance Strategy	Brief Description	Quality Assurance Category
Triangulation - Multiple data sources	Collected and analyzed data from multiple sources. Interviews, documentation, and archival/public data.	Credibility, Confirmability, and Dependability
Triangulation – Multiple case sites	Used more than a single healthcare delivery organization as a case site.	Credibility, Confirmability, and Dependability
Triangulation – Variety of participants	Data was collected from a variety of participants within healthcare delivery organizations	Credibility, Confirmability, and Dependability
Thick description	Case study report provided depth reflecting a rich description of case sites and analysis	Transferability
Member checking	Provided opportunity to research participants to review their responses to interview questions	Credibility
Journaling	Maintained field journal throughout data collection and case site visits	Credibility and Confirmability (Reflexivity)
Case study database	Audit trail. Maintained consistent file storage and explain analytical process. Connect evidence to research questions.	Confirmability and Dependability
Coding procedure	Established and adhered to a documented coding process though cases	Dependability
Case study report	Implications for public policy, public affairs practice, and social change	Application

Ethical Procedures. This final section outlines ethical procedures used to conduct the research. Using Creswell (2013) as a formatting guide, the section is organized chronologically, starting with ethical issues and procedures prior to, during, and after the study. This section builds on the earlier portion of the chapter on describing ethical issues with the role of the researcher as the data collection instrument to be more illustrative and comprehensive.

Before conducting site research, the approval process began. These steps included preliminary site approval, Walden University IRB, and the institutional IRB (or similar procedure) at the case site. To obtain initial approval to conduct on-site research, a letter of introduction served as the beginning point. General topic interest was informally discussed with potential case sites prior to the letter of introduction, instrumental in gaining merit of the general topic. Because the interaction was with colleagues outside my organization of employment, there were no power issues involved. There was a mutual understanding of the research topic and benefits from conducting the study. No conflicts of interest were experienced. The initial letter of introduction/cooperation for organizational gatekeepers was delivered following the Walden University IRB application. Once preliminary approval was obtained by the potential case site designee, the formalized process commenced.

The next step was obtaining Walden University IRB approval. This step was very detailed and serious, especially given the interaction with human participants. No data were collected until Walden University IRB approved the research application. After Walden University granted IRB approval (#11-20-0259891), institutional (case site)

approval followed. By collecting data at a healthcare delivery organization, many conduct their own medical research and have their own IRB. Having Walden University IRB approval in-hand first was helpful to facilitate site approval, respective of any additional information or steps necessary. One case site did require their own IRB approval, which was granted (#A16-445). Despite collecting data in a protected environment, this study did not propose, at any time, to gather data from vulnerable populations including patients receiving care at the facilities, children, or individuals with disabilities. Data were collected from professionals employed with the organization absent of clinical-based interventions or use of protected patient information. Although appreciation was expressed, due to financial constraints, no reward was distributed for participation in the study. Finally, as I was also currently employed in a healthcare delivery organization, annual confidentiality training was required by the organization and federal law to maintain employment. Thus, as the researcher I possessed institutional knowledge on the guidelines governing the protection of information in healthcare facilities.

Once approval was obtained from the Walden University IRB and the institutional site, recruitment of participants commenced. Working with the organizational gatekeeper or designee, potential participants were identified through snowballing, invitations were individually emailed, and scheduling of the site visit was arranged. Participants were scheduled using the gatekeeper as the primary contact or designee. Understanding the role of intrusion as a researcher, three attempts (by email and/or phone) were made to schedule interviews, after which communication to request an interview was ceased.

Obtaining consent was critical to ethical research. The following steps were provided to obtain proper consent: (a) Prior to on-site data collection, all participants signed a consent form, either electronically or paper; (b) Within the consent form, and reiterated during the interview introduction, participants were allowed to withdraw at any time for any reason without judgment; and (c) Procedures for respondent validation and how data was used was explained, interview outline presented, an opportunity for participants to ask any questions provided, and then the interview commenced. For participants wishing to withdraw, this was documented, and their data were deleted from the case study database and omitted unless not possible. If such issue was presented with withdrawal at a late stage of the research process, the Walden University IRB was to be contacted to provide additional guidance as necessary. Primary data collection ceased when I departed the case site, and participants formally exited the study following the timeline established for respondent validation procedures. No participants requested to have their data withdrawn from this study and no follow-ups were necessary.

During data collection and analysis case sites and participants were kept strictly confidential. Privacy procedures assured no one was singled out or indirectly identified by their participation. Although the study does not intend to collect nor analyze information protected by law or subjected to vulnerable populations, sensitive institutional information was delivered by participants. To ensure the privacy of information, only general information was used in the case study report (i.e. public affairs professional A, organization B, etc.). Although the intention was to communicate to research participants individually (scheduling interview, respondent validation

communications), when a mass email is practical (such as a thank you email or summary of findings), each participant email address was placed on the blind copy (Bcc) line to ensure confidentiality.

In conducting research, I was expected to maintain and store a significant volume of data. With technological advances and availability, most of the data were stored electronically. To ensure backup, all data were saved in two separate media storage units; a password-protected computer and a portable storage unit (flash drive). Each storage unit was maintained at all times. If data were misplaced or stolen, steps were to be first taken to retrieve the data. If data could not be located, research participants would have been informed of a potential compromise of data and the Walden IRB immediately contacted. Raw data (paper documents and electronic media) was stored in a filing cabinet at my residence and will be maintained for 5 years before being destroyed. If raw data is requested by the dissertation committee, it will be masked prior to delivery to ensure confidentiality. During the study, contact information for each participant was saved. Keeping contact information helps to deliver a finished, fully completed product and provide a final opportunity to express gratitude for assisting in completion of the dissertation. There were no known breaches of confidentiality in conducting this study.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 provided the qualitative research design, supported by research questions to a qualitative paradigm. A collective case study of three sites served as the research design. My role as the researcher was illustrated as the data collection instrument using primarily interviews, supported with documentation and archival

records as additional data sources. The analysis was conducted using a ground-up approach, featuring cross-case synthesis to unveil themes from multiple sites. In addition, the chapter illustrated a series of specific strategies used to establish and maintain research quality assurance. Tactics were illustrated to execute credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and application. The chapter concluded with a description of participant confidentiality procedures used to prevent and minimize potential ethical issues with on-site data collection. Chapter 4 follows the research design and methods with the case study data collection, analysis, and results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate intraorganizational interaction and engagement within healthcare delivery organizations in developing public affairs information products. Aiming at addressing gaps in the public affairs literature, through qualitative inquiry, research was guided by the primary research question and following subquestions.

Research Question

How do public affairs professionals engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

The primary purpose of Chapter 4 provides a thorough description of data collection, analysis, and results. Through a collective case study design, interviews, documentation, and public records data were collected at healthcare delivery organizations headquartered in the upper Midwest region of the United States. Interview

data served as the primary source of data through semi-structured questions (Appendix A and Appendix B). Participants ($n = 29$) were public affairs professionals ($n = 11$) and nonpublic affairs stakeholders ($n = 18$). Data analysis procedures are also described, using an open coding technique supported with memoing. Chapter 4 also includes an assessment of research quality and trustworthiness as presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 concludes with a comprehensive description of the results of the study.

Setting

Through a multiple case study design, data were collected through in-person visits at each site. Organizations were selected in alignment with purposeful sampling procedures described in Chapter 3, using healthcare delivery organization with a designated public affairs function and located in the upper Midwest region of the U.S as the inclusion criteria. Interview data, the primary source for this study, was collected in specific settings at the preference and schedule availability of individual participants. In-person settings included conference rooms or offices located in administrative buildings, hospitals, or clinical facilities during normal business operations (Monday through Friday between 8am and 5pm). Two interviews were conducted via telephone. Table 2 illustrates the interview data collection settings for each case site.

Table 2

Interview data collection settings

	Conference Room	Participant Office	Telephone
Case Site A	11	1	0
Case Site B	7	1	1
Case Site C	5	2	1
Total	23	4	2

Demographics

As depicted in Chapter 3, study participants comprised of public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals employed with healthcare delivery organizations. Commencing with public affairs, participants were identified using snowball sampling. Nonpublic affairs participants were represented as intraorganizational stakeholders who interact with public affairs on public policy issues. Overall, 32 individuals were invited via email (Appendix A) with 29 agreeing to participate (Table 3) via informed consent. Participants were comprised of 11 public affairs and 18 nonpublic affairs individuals across all three case sites (Table 4). There were no known specific conditions that perceived inordinate or unexpected externalized influence potentially impacting data collection and interpretation. As specified in Table 5, to maintain confidentiality, participants were classified by the following professional hierarchical levels: executive (vice president, chief, executive director), management (director, manager), and associate (specialist, consultant).

Table 3

Participants invited and participated

	Invited	Participated
Case Site A	13	12
Case Site B	10	9
Case Site C	9	8
Total	32	29

Table 4

Participants by role at the case site

	Public Affairs	Nonpublic Affairs
Case Site A	2	10
Case Site B	5	4
Case Site C	4	4
Total	11	18

Table 5

Professional level of study participants

	Case Site A	Case Site B	Case Site C	Total
Executive	2	3	1	6
Management	10	5	5	20
Associate	0	1	2	3

Data Collection

Case study data collection comprised of multiple sources of data across multiple sites compiled into a comprehensive case study database. Primary data collection occurred over the course of three in-person case site visits. The in-person visits for case sites A and B occurred over a 3-day and two-period respectively during late January to early February 2016. Due to the time to obtain organizational IRB approval (in addition to Walden University), case site C visit commenced over two business days in early August 2016.

Out of the 32 individuals invited, 29 agreed to participate with interviews (Table 3). Interviewees were comprised of 11 public affairs and 18 nonpublic affairs individuals (Table 4). Using the interview guides (Appendix A and Appendix B), all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts generated eliminated unnecessary filler words, pauses, and gaps. There was an exception as six participants refused audio recording. In lieu of a transcript, interview notes were provided to participants that declined to be recorded for confirmation purposes. Although audio recording was preferred for data collection and I had not anticipated the refusal of six participants, notetaking provided an alternative source of written interview data, and respected the wishes of participants. Audio recording was collected using a SONY ICD-P520 digital recorder with dual desktop microphones and audio line splitter. Telephone interviews were recorded using an Android audio recording application from a Samsung Note 4 smartphone. Notes were generated for all participants regardless of whether individuals consented to audio recording. No interviews were held outside of the arranged site visit.

Secondary sources of data incorporated organizational documentation and public records. Organizational documents were provided via in-person or email and were de-identified following the approved IRB procedures. A total of 26 document artifacts were collected from eight participants across all three case sites. Documents included primarily internal email interaction such as memos, news articles, discussion points, and notes. Although an unknown was the volume of documentation data that would be collected, 26 were fewer than anticipated. There appeared some apprehension about sharing official organizational documents. A total of 24 public records were collected between late

January 2016 and August 2016. Public records were public affairs information products submitted to policymakers in response to proposed legislation or rulemaking, such as comment letters. Public records were limited to those dated in the most recent 5 years to maintain current relevancy to the research. Table 6 summarizes documentation and public records as secondary sources of data.

Table 6

Documentation and Public Records sources

	Case Site A	Case Site B	Case Site C	Total
Documents	17	4	5	26
Public Records	7	10	7	24

My memoing and journaling also served as sources of qualitative data; journal writing provided self-reflection throughout the case site visits. In crafting and reviewing entries, journaling offered a tool for data collection observations and enhancement opportunities. In my journal entries I noted that interviews were spurred by cohesive engagement and interactive dialogue. In addition, journaling allowed me to identify potential areas of improvement, including modifying the line of questioning and nonverbal skills to better establish trust and participant comfort. I crafted eight journal entries as an aid to improve interviewing and to document key take-always from each site visit day. Borrowed from grounded theory research (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2013), I conducted memoing as a method of documenting themes and occurred before and during data analysis. Explained further in the data analysis section,

10 memos were crafted based on themes arising from the interview, documentation, and public/archival records data.

Data were collected and stored in alignment with the privacy and confidentiality procedures outlined in Chapter 3. Per confidentiality plans, all participants were assigned a de-identified code. Documents were also de-identified and assigned a unique code, along with the code of the participant supplying the document. To ensure privacy, all interviews were conducted in an office or conference room with the doors closed. I maintained paper copies of documentation during the entire duration of the site visit, scanned the documents to generate an electronic copy, and stored everything in a secure storage cabinet. Audio files from the interviews and electronic documents were downloaded and saved to a secured electronic storage medium (flash drive) and deleted from the email server. All data were backed up on a password protected laptop computer.

Overall, the data collection plan and study execution were closely aligned. However, a few circumstances arose creating minor deviances. First, six participants declined to be audio recorded. Although I anticipated one or two participants to decline, six seemed high, but respecting their wishes and honoring their participation, I did not want them to feel uncomfortable. I explained that by refusing audio recording, member checking procedures would be limited to interpretative notes rather than an actual full transcript. When this occurred, I modified my line of questioning to provide an oral summation of their response to ensure notes were accurately captured. Second, there was an anticipation of greater volume of organizational documentation. Although the quality of documents in relation to the research questions were relevant, I was hoping for more

participants to share documents, such as email correspondence. Third, participants often answered several of the planned sequence of interview questions in responding to the first question. This was positive in providing additional areas of probing, but also created an unexpected learning curve reflected in my second journal entry. Finally, through nonverbal communication cues, there appeared to be some level of apprehension regarding the openness of participant responses. As noted in a Journal Entry 4, it appeared some respondents did not desire to speak too openly, honestly, or negatively about their role in the context of organizational dynamics processes. This is acknowledged in Chapter 1 as a shortfall in qualitative research that interview data needs to be considered face value as an actual depiction of the situation.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of qualitative research, data analysis often occurred in tandem with data collection. Aided by Atlas ti. CAQDAS, data analysis products included memos, coding, code family reports, and case study reports. Field notes, journal entries, and memoing served as data analysis tools products prior to coding processes and case study reports. This helped frame the open coding protocol. This section outlines the data analysis steps.

Conducting a collective case study had to consider each case as an individual study, or unit of analysis. Approaching each case site as a separate study guided data analysis, and produced individual case site reports. The first step for completing data analysis was generating a textual artifact of the primary sources of data: interviews, organizational documents, and archival/public records. Interviews were transcribed;

organizational documents and public records were reviewed using their respective protocols. Textual data were uploaded to Atlas ti. and categorized per each individual case site. Due to the time between case site visits A, B, and C, data analysis was completed for case sites A and B prior to data collection for site C. Data artifacts (transcripts, documents, and public records) were assigned a code following the confidentiality procedures in Chapter 3. To delineate responses from public affairs and nonpublic affairs participants for data analysis purposes, each participant was assigned the letters PA (public affairs) or NPA (nonpublic affairs) followed by a number.

Data coding followed. Per Chapter 3 procedures, I applied a ground-up open coding approach. Due to the lack of strong theoretical foundations underpinning the study, data analysis techniques were acquired from grounded theory research designs. Like memoing, open coding borrows from grounded theory, codes are generated from data and not predetermined. Codes were produced from each case site based on patterns and themes emerging from interview, documentation, and public records data. Atlas ti. CAQDAS provided the ability to generate cliff notes, save seminal quotations, assign codes into families, and generate various reports. To categorize data and align with the study's purpose, I assigned code families to the study's research questions and subquestions.

During the process of coding, patterns and themes emerged. To aid in identifying themes and documenting thoughts and observations about the data, I used memoing throughout data analysis. Ten memos (Table 7 and Appendix G) were generated. While coding was used for each individual site and focused on the particular site, memos were

updated, modified, and edited as the study progressed and served as a tool to aid cross-case synthesis. This data analysis strategy balanced treating each site as an individual unit, and cross-case synthesis aligning with the technique known as stacking, explained in Chapter 3.

Table 7

Summary of memo themes

Memo Number	Theme(s)
1	Ad-hoc and Informal
2	Content Expert as Secondary Contact in Information Products
3	Filtering
4	Formality in relation to impact
5	Legislation vs Rulemaking
6	Nonpublic affairs best practices
7	Public affairs best practices
8	Public affairs structure and decision-making
9	Two-way communication
10	Implications for public policy and administration

Following the assignment of codes to text passages, each code was assigned to families. To provide a link between codes and research questions, I assigned the code families as the primary research question and subquestions. In addition, semistructured interview questions aligned with the research questions. Several codes overlapped code families. I generated reports for each code family and saved into the case study database. The reports contained the frequency of each code in relation to the family, and text passages that were assigned to the code. As expected, the primary research question contained the most codes, corresponding passages, and was the most complex to explain.

Following Yin's (2013) guidance, I completed case study reports for each individual site (Appendix I). Reports transitioned coding raw data to an analytical synthesis of patterns and themes. Each case study report contained the following: (a) brief site description, (b) data collection procedures, (c) sources of data collected, (d) data analysis procedures, (e) code key, (f) code list, (g) research questions, (h) results, (i) discussion, and (j) conclusion. I reviewed all code families, copying and pasting codes from the CAQDAS-generated reports into the results section of the report with citations to the participants. The results section was reviewed and classified by bullet points. Each bullet point was placed under the code family (research question) and organized in order based on the strength and frequency of the code. The discussion section contained observations, including divergent nuances and were aided by the memos. The results section contained later in this chapter represented a cross-case synthesis across all three case sites.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative methods, establishing and implementing research trustworthiness required a multitude of procedures. Chapter 3 provides explanation of research quality, summarized in Table 1. The following quality assurance strategies were implemented in this study, complemented with specific tactics: credibility (data submersion), transferability (broader context of importance), dependability (consistency), confirmability (neutrality/reflexivity) and application (practical implications) of the study.

In case study designs, amongst the strongest of quality assurance strategies is triangulation: data, case sites and participants. Triangulation provides evidence for research credibility, confirmability, and dependability. The primary source of data were interviews with 29 total participants across three case sites. Participants included a combination of public affairs and an assortment of nonpublic affairs participants serving in an administrative function. Data were drawn from nonpublic affairs professionals employed in financial, legal, medical, marketing, insurance, consulting, quality improvement, account management, and compliance functions.

Case sites were asked to participate in the study through criterion-based selection. Criteria I used for selection included the following: healthcare delivery organization, designated public affairs function, and headquartered in the upper Midwestern region. A total of three organizations were studied and visited for data collection. Using more than a single case site furnished stronger evidence of patterns and themes generated from the data. Each site was treated as an individual study and unit of analysis through the completion of case study reports. The primary outcome I focused on was analyzing cross-case themes emerging from the case site data.

The final tactic I used in triangulation strategy is multiple sources of data, a hallmark of case study research. Transcripts or notes were generated from 29 interviews. Interview transcripts and notes provided the most text and served as the primary source of data. Although the volume of supporting data were not ideally balanced between the organizations (see Table 6), 26 documents and 24 public records provided secondary support to the interview.

A documented coding procedure was employed to support analytical dependability. I used open coding for this study, employing a ground-up approach to data analysis, absent of any pre-established codes. Similar to memoing, open coding is generally part of grounded theory research (Maxwell, 2013), which was also considered for this study. I linked the coding procedure to the research questions, included as a matrix in Appendix H, and maintained in the case study database.

Supporting credibility in this study was also carried out with member checking. Per research credibility procedures detailed in Chapter 3, I provided participants the opportunity to review interview responses or researcher-generated notes. An adjustment to the anticipated approach of transcript checking was not all participants agreed to audio recording (six declined). Each participant was emailed a transcript or notes (depending on consent to audio recording) with a minimum of three weeks for review and response. Out of 29 transcripts and notes delivered via email to participants for review, 13 individuals responded with confirmation or minor modifications (12 via email, 1 via phone). One participant requested an extension to review, which was granted for an additional period of two weeks.

Journaling also aided in conducting the study. Especially useful during case site visits, journal entries served as a self-reflection and observation tool. Throughout the data collection process, I administered improvements, including the approach to interview questions and being more comfortable with probing areas of interest from participants. Journal entries also assisted me in data collection and analysis, and outlined procedures for obtaining public records data.

Generating a thick description of the case sites assisted research depth and transferability. Through multiple participants, data sources and sites, I generated a rich description of the case sites through individual case reports. Described earlier in this chapter, case study reports included a brief site description, data collection procedures, sources of data collected, data analysis procedures, code key, code list, research questions, results, discussion, and conclusion. Thick description of the case sites are implications concluded, positioned to aid the practice of public affairs, public administration and the development and implementation of public policy. Furthermore, I noted in the discussion and conclusion sections where case study reports provide application to public affairs practice and the value of connecting nonpublic affairs stakeholders to the policymaking process.

To support confirmability and dependability, I maintained a case study database throughout this study. The goal of the database connects the case study evidence to the research questions. The case study database provides an overall data audit trail by maintaining a consistent file storage, provides coding procedures and the overall data analytical process. All data sets related to the study are labeled and categorized for easy retrieval. The case study database continued to be maintained in an electronic file storage medium for a period of 5 years following the conclusion of the study, per the research requirements.

Results

The results of the study are presented in alignment with the primary research question and subquestions. For consistent notation purposes throughout this section, the

following are tactics are used: interview responses are cited by the coded participant(s), documents noted as doc preceded by case site letter, followed by the categorized number, and public record denoted as record preceded by site letter followed by the categorized number. With terminology, public affairs is used interchangeably with government relations and government affairs per the nomenclature of the case sites. Rather than present the results sequentially with the primary research question followed by subquestions, I organized results using a general structure, process, and outcome framework. This approach is known as the Donabedian model of healthcare quality (Rademakers, Delnoij, & de Boer, 2011). Using a structure (public affairs structure), process (decision-making, intraorganizational engagement, barriers), and outcomes (using nonpublic affairs knowledge) framework organizes the results in a sequential manner and improve flow. The results are organized and presented by the following research questions:

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. How do public affairs engage and interact with intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
5. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Public Affairs Structure

The organization and structure of public affairs function (also commonly known as government relations and/or government affairs) differed across all case sites in the study. Cross-case synthesis was mostly divergent across commonly sought patterns and themes. Therefore, the results stemming from this research question is presented primarily referencing individual sites.

Case site A comprised of two dedicated public affairs professionals; one assigned to state-level policy issues and one handling the federal policy portfolio (PA1, PA2). Both reported directly to the CEO with an advisory committee comprised of senior leaders meeting approximately quarterly (PA1, PA2). In prior years, the committee provided oversight for government relations, but now serves more to keep leaders informed (PA2). The direct line of access to the CEO was found to differ the most across the case sites sampled. This dynamic may be attributed to the CEO's expressed knowledge and interest in government relations and public policy issues (PA2). As described by PA2,

It really helps now that [CEO name omitted] gets it. [He/She] understands government relations. But if you are reporting to a COO that doesn't understand government relations, it can be a challenge potentially. I don't think it would be nearly as effective as direct access to the CEO.

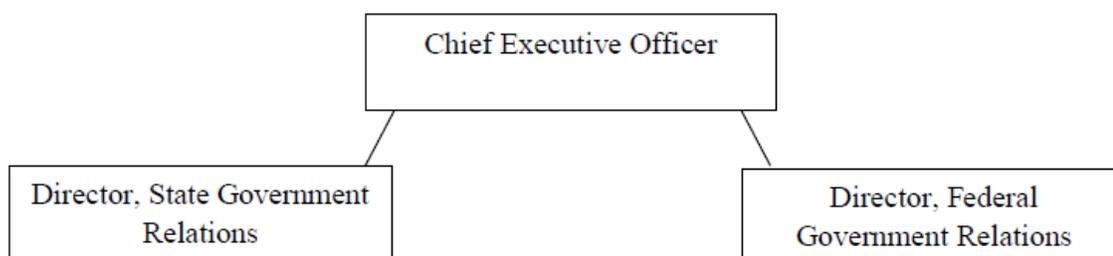


Figure 2. Structure of Government Relations for Organization A.

In comparison to case site A, there was increased organizational hierarchy in sites B and C. Case site B was structured hierarchically as a department within a division, reporting up to a chief administrative officer as a member of the executive leadership team (Bdoc1). Under the corporate affairs department, case site B was lead by a vice president of government relations, overseeing a state representative, local representative, and a policy analyst (Bdoc1, PAB1, PAB4). Case site C was also structured hierarchically, centralized, and lead by the senior vice president of government affairs and community relations reporting to the chief administrative officer (Cdoc1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4). Under the senior vice president was the director of government affairs, then four positions divided up between two distinct functions of the organization (Cdoc1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4). Within the divide is one internal facing manager or specialist, and one external-oriented manager or specialist (Cdoc1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4).

Case site B also contrasted from all sites in differentiating between the function of public affairs and government relations. While government relations interacted with public policymaking, the focus of this study, the designated public affairs function primarily engaged with general public perception, image reputation management,

outreach, and public response (PAB6). This appeared to align with public relations. The public affairs function was separate from government relations and reported to the chief communications officer (PAB4, PAB6). When necessary, public affairs engages directly with government relations when public policy issues requires or merits an external public response (PAB6).

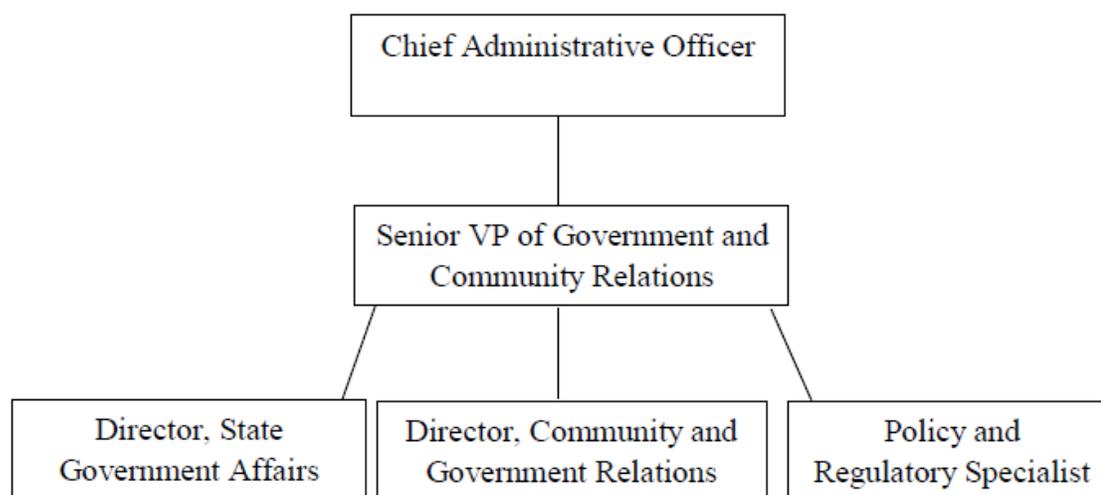


Figure 3. Structure of Government Relations for Organization B.

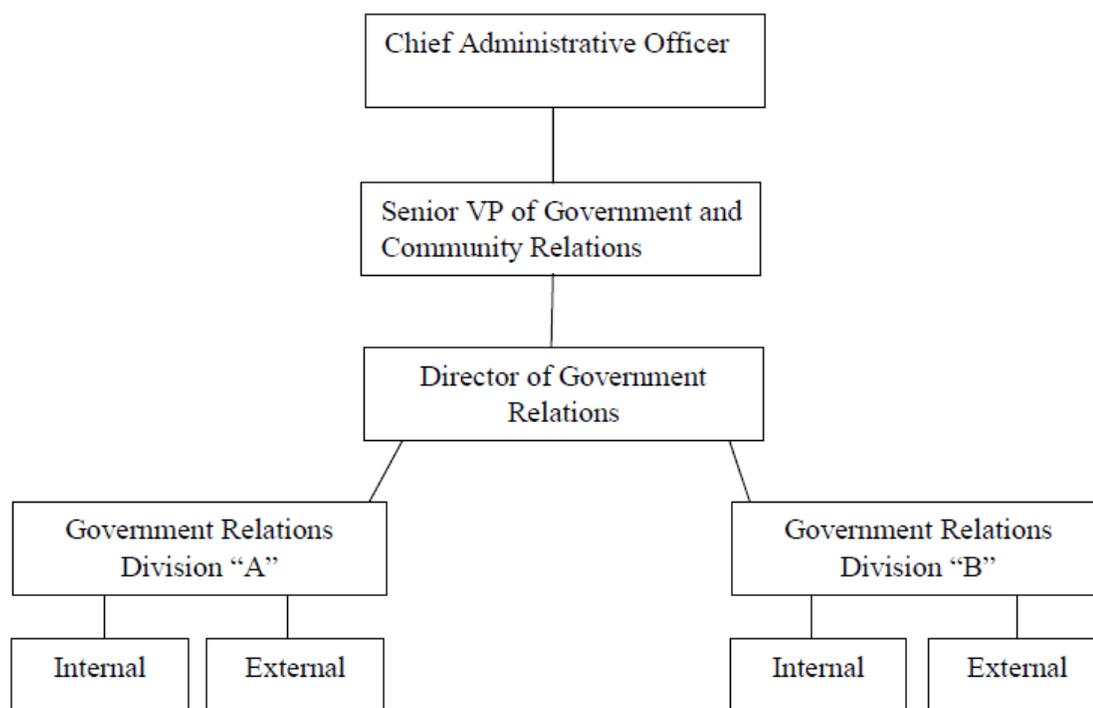


Figure 4. Structure of Government Relations for Organization C.

Cross-cutting patterns and themes for describing public affairs structure were very limited. Case sites B and C were similarly organized under the administrative division of their respective healthcare delivery organizations. This might suggest the structure of site A is an outlier. In addition, classification of position responsibilities also differed: case site A divided as state or local public policy issues as did case site B, but C was divided as internal or external facing with an overall limited emphasis at the federal level. Finally, none of the organizations called their designated their public affairs function by the name; two of the three were noted as government relations (PA1, PA2, Bdoc1, Cdoc1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4), while another used both government affairs and government relations in their nomenclature (Bdoc1, PAB1, PAB4). Only site B differentiated public affairs with government relations and government affairs.

Public affairs participants were asked about the perceived effectiveness of how the function was structured. In responding, public affairs respondents did not identify significant problems with issues with public affairs from a structural perspective. PA1 noted resources were a challenge, while PAC1 suggested a centralized committee may help with the flow of information. PA2 and PAB4 noted the public affairs structure works well, further echoed by PAC2 who, “based on prior experience with other companies, the current structure is very ideal to an effective government relations function.” This appeared to suggest public affairs is structured to fit with the organization, and not consistent across the sites sampled. How case site A public affairs is structured, for example, may not work for another organization and vice versa. The inherent differences in the organizational structure across all case sites supports the existing literature on the lack of an ideal way to structure a public affairs function.

Intraorganizational engagement and interaction

The primary research question collected data to address the gap depicted in the conceptual framework. Supporting the theoretical framework of social engagement as the means to extract embedded information, the principal research question was intended to understand intraorganization interaction. This portion of the study’s results are organized using a funnel approach—broad, overarching explanatory themes followed by specific patterns on strategies and tactics from both public and nonpublic affairs perspectives.

The Art of Public Affairs Interaction and Engagement. Data from public and nonpublic affairs participants, focused on a problem in public affairs practice.

Throughout data collection and analysis, patterns emerged explaining intraorganizational

knowledge transfer as an art. As the most overarching engagement theme, the practice of public affairs is not supported by a formulaic, methodical approach. Addressed later in the results section further highlight various strategies employed by public affairs to alleviate challenges with internal engagement. Similar to the variation in structures of public affairs functions, facilitating knowledge sharing through the process of engagement and interaction are varied. Seven public affairs participants cross-cutting all case sites alluded to intraorganizational practice as an art (PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB2, PAB4, PAC1, PAC3).

Public affairs participant PA2 noted frankly there is “a lot of art to government relations than what most people realize...it’s political art much more than political science.” At case site B, public affairs participant PAB4 supported the art of the engagement, stating “Because there is not a science to this, you are kind of working in a constant state of ambiguity.” Participant PAB1 followed with “there isn’t one defined process,” further echoed by PAC1 noting “it is not a really clear process, it’s just what you know of everybody who is going to have a response and really able to target what you’re sending out.” Participant PA1, a long-term veteran professional in government relations, contemplated

well there’s no formula that I can tell you to take two counts of this, and two cups of that, and slice it and dice it...you got to be really careful... And I don’t know how else to describe it. I use every trick I can think of. Just to try to work with people. And to find people that are pointed in the same direction, have the same attitudes. But it’s hard to find people that know and can help you with the things

you are trying to do...It's not a science...I don't think there's a curriculum. That's what makes it difficult and fun, because it's not something you can just spell out.

The art of public affairs engagement provides the overarching description of intraorganizational knowledge transfer. A holistic theory of knowledge transfer as the theoretical framework considers both the sender and receiver. The sender of knowledge is stock, and the receiver uses the absorbed knowledge to create new knowledge and action. Knowledge transfer can be sent as stock from public affairs (30 coded data points) or nonpublic affairs stakeholders (59 coded data points). The black box of the conceptual framework represents the social interaction between knowledge senders and receivers—public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders. In this study, *bidirectional learning* emerged as a theme describing the act of holistic knowledge transfer. Considered synonymous with holistic knowledge transfer, bidirectional learning was expressed as knowledge sharing, observed at 34 data points through 15 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA8, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, NPAC2). Strategies and tactics facilitating holistic knowledge transfer are described in later sections.

Bidirectional learning links knowledge of delivering healthcare to the level of public policy. This is the underlying purpose of the study. As public affairs participant PAB1 described, “we work in tandem with our experts on the front lines to ensure that they fully understand the issue at hand, so that they can make educated decisions on the recommendation, and so they are critical.” Participant PA1, also a public affairs professional, agreed “Typically were working with the concept hammered out in some

type of a policy paper for a bill. And what we're trying to do is put the concept in touch with reality, and the people who actually do that work." To obtain a broad understanding of policy proposals and the impact to patient care, nonpublic affairs participant NPAB2 reported, "We bring government affairs in, we bring operations folks in, we bring compliance in and have a good conversation."

Rather than explicitly stating knowledge transfer in participant responses, NPA1 introduced the bidirectional learning term. NPA1 was describing the outcome of intraorganizational interaction with public affairs by connecting the knowledge of professionals delivering patient care to public policy, explaining

I think there is a bidirectional learning that happens as a result of those interactions. You know in terms of, and I'm only surmising not having been in a political role, but if I were listening to a lobbyist or somebody from an organization tell me the way it should be and the reasons behind that, it may make some intrinsic sense, but realistically many of those folks have a very defined agenda. I think when you hear from people that are actually delivering the care, it's similar to what we need to do more of in the medical industry which is listen to our patients. What are they telling us about the care delivery system? What are they telling us about their experience and how this is working or not. And that's what I think what we need to do at all levels for patients, the health system to patients, to the government to the payers, and then at every level in between that bidirectional flow. When people are communicating, often times we find out the

same headache exists at every different level. It's just that nobody is talking about it, and nobody is fixing it and it's persisting because that's how it's always been.

From the perspective of public affairs, intraorganizational engagement and interaction is an art. At the core of interaction is knowledge transfer, also known as bidirectional learning. Further explaining how the interaction is conducted were distinct themes, but intersecting elements. Within all case sites, *ad-hoc* was the most prevalent theme specifically describing intraorganizational engagement between public and nonpublic affairs participants. Observed across all case sites at 30 data points through 19 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA8, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1) *ad-hoc* pertained to interaction on public policy issues only as-needed as policy issues arise. In describing the *ad-hoc* nature of interaction, both public and nonpublic affairs participants strongly agreed. Nonpublic affairs participant NPA4 noted engagement is “really dependent on the topic”, echoed by NPAC2 describing interaction as “It is almost completely *ad-hoc*” and NPA3 “as it comes up.” Public affairs participants also supported the *ad-hoc* patterns: “I think it's totally *ad hoc* would be best way to describe it” (PA1), or as PAC1 stated, “it is more as-needed.” Study participant NPA4 explained how issues arise as “hey we are seeing something here, we would like to get together with you get your thoughts on it, then feed you the appropriate information you would need to take it to the next step.” Findings provide support public affairs primarily seeks knowledge from nonpublic affairs stakeholders on an as-needed basis, usually when policy issues arise warranting an organizational response.

The strongest data points indicate public affairs seek intraorganizational knowledge on public policy issues on an as-needed basis. The ad-hoc interaction is usually *informal* or *casual*, noted by 14 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB3, NPAC2, PAC1) at 20 interview data points. Respondents supported informality, with nonpublic affairs participant NPAB5 describing interaction as “totally informal.” Participants NPA5, NPA6, and NPA11 described their interaction with public affairs also as informal, with NPA5 noting when public affairs is “asking questions about interpretation or getting feedback. Those things are pretty informal.” Nonpublic affairs participant NPA9 further supported the practice of informality, stating, “typically it would be, here is the bill, what are your thoughts?” NPAB2 echoed the informality with a request received that read something like, “hey we are being asked to comment on this bill or on this legislation, what are your thoughts?” Participant NPA3 also indicated interaction is “not a formalized use this document kind of thing, and mainly just generally speaking, it’s an e-mail.” Finally, nonpublic affairs participant NPAC2 alluded to feedback as, “Typically it is informal, low-key feedback...very little of my expertise is related in any formal matter.” To summarize, responses suggested not only do public affairs and nonpublic affairs interact and share knowledge as-needed but when the interaction occurs, it is usually informal.

In contrast, not all public affairs ad-hoc interaction is casual or informal. At one case site, public affairs participant PAC3 described the systematic approach to seeking knowledge intraorganizationally on public policy issues. Suggesting greater communication formality, the organization follows a standard, structured protocol for

distributing information on proposed public policy, using pre-formatted email memos with a table of contents or index (Cdoc2, Cdoc3, NPAC4). The recipients of the email are requested to respond with their knowledge on the various areas of their content expertise and cite the relevant sections (NPAC1). This more formal interaction is also done on an as-needed basis. Participant NPAC4 followed-up with establishing a review committees on proposed and final policies when the issues are presented. Relating to decision-making processes, at times ad-hoc interaction is formal when presenting a public policy issue to executive leadership (PAC3). In addition, at case site A, ad-hoc interaction may result in scheduling meetings with departments and teams (NPA4). Public affairs participants PAB2 and PAB3 at case site B alluded to leveraging established standing committees involving subject matter experts to share knowledge in responding to policy issues. Thus, even though much of the ad-hoc requests for intraorganizational knowledge leads to informal interaction, at times engagement occurs with greater formality.

At the other end, a distinct difference to the prevalence of ad-hoc interaction was regular engagement. Although interaction on responding to public policy issues appeared to occur primarily as-needed, 13 respondents (NPA7, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, NPAB7, PAB6, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3) indicated some aspect of consistent interaction outside of specifically being requested to respond ad-hoc. At 21 data points across all case sites, *consistent interaction* also detailed how public affairs engage and interact internally in sharing knowledge on public policy proposals.

Public affairs and nonpublic affairs respondents NPAB4, PA1, PAB3, NPAB2, NPAC3, PAC1, PAC3 acknowledged interaction on a regular basis on public policy

issues. The use of consistent interaction appeared aligned with greater formality, for instance committees, meetings and agendas. This interaction also facilitated knowledge transfer—where public affairs provide insight on public policy matters and nonpublic affairs deliver content expertise. At case site A, quarterly meetings with senior leaders are scheduled to discuss public policy issues with formal agendas and minutes (Adoc11, PA1). Participant NPAC3 noted regular meetings with senior leaders on strategy and planning across the organization, which included report outs from public affairs.

Scheduled interactions may be frequent, such as bi-weekly (PAC3, NPAB7, PAB6). Public affairs participant PAC3 described formal bi-weekly group meetings, comprised of cross-functional stakeholders regularly consulted to supply feedback on public policy issues. PAC3 discussed the internal committee convening to provide updates and share knowledge, which is

jointly lead by three individuals: government relations, product management lead, and an actuary. Product manager sets the agenda, and sometimes bring in subject matter experts to present on key policy pieces. The group is invaluable to make sure everyone is on the same page, as there is a lot to be discussed on interpretation of public policy.

In divergence, consistent interaction may also be casual. In addition to committees, scheduled meetings, minutes, and agendas, intraorganizational engagement and knowledge transfer may be informal conversations absent of formality. As a means of obtaining updates and knowledge, public affairs participant PA2 noted, “I schedule regular calls with a lot of different departments. Like every three months, we just get

something on the books. What is going on in your department? I don't care if it's government relations specifically, let me know." Public affairs participant PA2 agreed with informal scheduled engagement with certain stakeholders as "monthly and we talk over all the different issues." Nonpublic affairs participants NPAB2 and NPAB4 explained interaction with public affairs occurring "on a regular basis" and "constantly interacting." Participant NPA9 also agreed with regular, informal interaction as

Valuable. First of all, everyone is so busy today, however, if you don't stop and take the time to at least have a conversation with your colleagues you may not all be on the same page on important matters...It's a great way to force yourself to take 30 minutes out of your day and at least catch up.

In sum, this section broadly described public affairs intraorganizational engagement, interaction, and facilitating knowledge transfer as requiring an art. Using a funnel approach, data points indicated knowledge transfer as a blend and overlap of formal and consistent, and informal and ad-hoc. Primarily, public affairs engagement is as-needed and informal. However, sometimes ad-hoc engagement is formal, especially interacting with intraorganizational committees and decision-makers. In opposite, data also indicated formal, consistent interaction occurred through scheduled meetings and established committees of intraorganizational stakeholders. Nonetheless, consistent interaction does not always require formality. In sharing knowledge, public affairs also interacted with internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders in a regular, informal manner, especially those often requested to provide expertise on public policy issues. Therefore, evidence suggests the art of intraorganizational engagement and facilitation of embedded

information through knowledge transfer is an overlap and blend of ad-hoc and informal, and consistent and formal interaction. Depicted in Figure 5, this answers an important case study research question honing in on how knowledge sharing is occurring intraorganizationally between public affairs and nonpublic affairs.

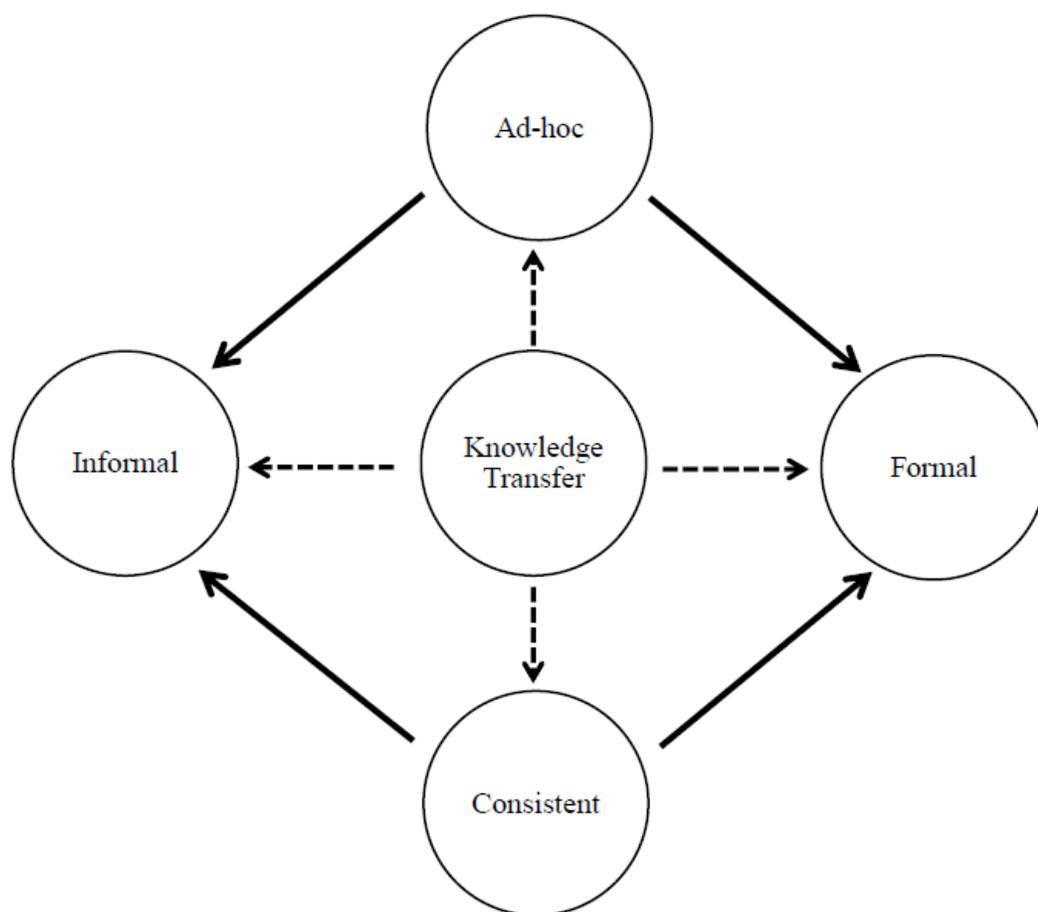


Figure 5. The Art of Public Affairs Intraorganizational Engagement and Interaction.

Public Affairs Information Flow. Semi-structured interview questions sought to fulfill a literature gap on understanding the general flow of public affairs information within organizations. In building on descriptions of public affairs internal engagement

with stakeholders, information flow aligned with the framework in Figure 5. Responses identified the type of information and consistency by which the information was delivered. A description of public affairs information flow was separated from the actual process of engaging to respond on public policy issues. Breaking down the process of engagement and interaction is described in the next section.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated public affairs information is distributed within case sites studied (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, Adoc10, Adoc4). Often intertwined, the most prevalent products of public affairs intraorganizational information flow are public policy news articles and updates on public policy issues. Observed across all case sites at 30 points by 16 participants (NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB6, PAC1) public affairs professionals share health policy-related news articles and general updates on public policy issues with nonpublic affairs stakeholders.

To keep intraorganizational stakeholders apprised on public policy issues, the importance of sharing public affairs information cannot be underscored. Organizational document Adoc16 illustrates health policy updates distributed to nonpublic affairs stakeholders as usually in the form of relevant trade industry news clips. As public affairs participant PA1 said, “we do need a way of spreading information so that everybody is on the same page.” Data suggested the general flow of public affairs information also aligns with components of Figure 5 as either ad-hoc or consistent.

Two of the three case sites studied prepare and distribute a regular public affairs information product internally via email. In case site A, a compilation of healthcare policy-related news articles are delivered via email to leadership, management, and any others interested within the organization during the regular business week (PA1, NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, NPA11). For distributing current public policy information, public affairs participant PA1 noted “The biggest tool that I use are my news clips.” Case site B employs a similar tactic on providing updates on public policy issues, but on a weekly basis (PAB1, NPAB4). Each Friday distributed to management and senior leaders, public affairs compiles and summarizes a series of news articles on healthcare policy and politics, along with updates on organizational public affairs activities (PAB1, PAB3, PAB6, NPAB4). Study participants NPAB2 and NPA4 noted the consistent updates and news articles are “very useful” and “really nice...you can see what the major headlines are and that usually gives an indicator as to what’s coming up or what are some of the major policy issues.” NPAB4 further supported consistent communication on current issues, describing the weekly email update as “incredibly helpful” and NPA2 even noted reading healthcare policy articles can “fuel a future conversation” with public affairs.

All case sites communicate updates to nonpublic affairs stakeholders on policy issues, but the updates may not be regularly scheduled. Ad-hoc information flow pertains to targeted updates on public policy issues as-needed, similar to how public affairs primarily engages internally. Rather only using weekly updates as a means of providing information, public affairs participant PAB1 noted, “Now then there are instances, like

let's say the state budget that impacts us. I would send out a separate communication to the executive leadership team to inform them of the status of those types of decisions.” Participant NPA1 agreed on receiving ad-hoc updates, “I got an e-mail last night... a quick update that the city just approved our use permit to begin construction.” Finally, public affairs keep interested stakeholders updated on legislation of interest if the bill advances in the policymaking process (PAC2) or even “send stuff to me to give me a heads up as well” (NPAB2).

Case site C typically does not rely on consistency in mass communicating public affairs information throughout the organization. As participant PAC2 described, “government relations does not do a periodic newsletter, but targets communication to specific functions in the organization” and information is “communicated to senior leaders during legislative session to provide high level updates on key bills and ones being advocated from the organization.” In portraying public affairs information flow, PAC1 explained

During the legislative session, I don't think [name omitted] has a regular schedule. But I would say it would be about once every 1-2 weeks, or pretty frequently, especially if it's something like a bill or is the end of session, [name omitted] send out updates that anybody in the organization can sign up for, and a lot of people do. Then during the summer, [he/she] will maybe do a little bit less of that and more federal focus. That is a regular communication that most people in the organization know that comes from government relations and people can sign up for regular updates. There would be a little more high level, 'what's going

on' more so than an update on exactly what we are working on. This is what is happening in the legislature, or this is an issue important to us and what we are doing. There maybe would be a couple of things, but for the most part, it's not used to gather feedback its' just to sending out so everyone knows what's going on and what's important for government relations.

By and large, the flow of public affairs information appears to follow a similar approach as engagement and interaction. Two of the three case sites use a regularly scheduled internal email communication to mass recipients, usually at the management level, while one site only provides updates to a broad audience only during periods of legislative activity. Whether delivered consistently or as-needed, much of organizational public affairs information flow are products delivered via email on current news articles on politics, healthcare policy, and updates on specific public policy issues.

Intraorganizational Knowledge Transfer Process Description, Strategies, and Tactics. Proceeding into the study's core are numerous themes describing and explaining the process of intraorganizational engagement and knowledge transfer. The process-based orientation narrows the focus on how knowledge transfer is occurring within healthcare delivery organizations on public policy matters. Data collected from public and nonpublic affairs participants unveiled processes occurring by which public affairs seeks to obtain knowledge from nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Applying the conceptual framework as a guide, this section is organized by illustrating how public affairs distributes requests for feedback, how nonpublic affairs stakeholders provide input, and the interaction facilitating engagement.

Commencing interaction on public policy issues. Commencing interaction on proposed public policy may come from different sources. Starting the interaction on a specific public policy proposal may originate from public affairs (28 coded data points) or nonpublic affairs (22 coded data points). The type of interaction usually differed from the source of origination.

Public affairs initiating interaction on public policy issues and proposals was observed from 16 participants representing all case sites (NPA1, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, NPAC1, NPAC4, PAC3) and noted in two organizational documents (Adoc5, Cdoc2). Requests for intraorganizational knowledge proceeded the filtering process described in the prior section. Aligning with the conceptual framework, the content of the request is sharing information or proposals and/or requesting stakeholder input. In practice, public affairs will often take legislation “and then I shoot it to our subject matter experts” (PA2). Nonpublic affairs stakeholders responded that “government relations sends requests” (NPAC1), “brings legislation to my attention” (NPAB5), “send out information to me” (NPAC4) or “will ask for our input” (NPA3). Other stakeholders noted public affairs will ask “have seen this or head about, what are your thoughts?” (NPA4) or “what do you think about this, what should our position be?” (NPA9). Engagement and interaction between public and nonpublic affairs is primarily communicated from public affairs.

Commencing interaction on public policy proposals may also originate from nonpublic affairs stakeholders (NPAC1). Ten respondents (NPA4, NPAB4, NPAB7, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NAC4, PAC1, PAC2) across all case sites indicated

inquiry on public policy proposals may start with communication from nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Participants PAC1, NPA4, and PA2 responded that public policy issues may arrive from nonpublic affairs stakeholders and commence the interaction, although participant NPAC4 acknowledged that it rarely occurs. But public affairs participant PAB1 discussed how “I became more heavily reliant on content experts to bring issues to my attention.” When communication starts from nonpublic affairs inquiring on proposed policy, a filtering process (described in the next section) occurs and the assessment is communicated back to the stakeholder (PAC2). Strategically, if the proposal does not merit engagement, public affairs may track the bill and communicate to the individual(s) updates if the bill moves (PAC2).

Intraorganizationally, the commencing of engagement on public policy issues is bidirectional. Although interaction on a specific policy proposal usually begins with communication from public affairs, nonpublic affairs stakeholders may also request public affairs to analyze and assess proposals. Nonpublic affairs participant NPAB4 explained the process as “It’s two ways. If I see something, I’ll reach out to them. You never know who’s going to hear something first. Often times government affairs will inform us of newly proposed regulations and laws.” The primary difference is when public affairs requests nonpublic affairs for input and expertise, the policy proposal has already been filtered and vetted to warrant the need for expertise via intraorganizational stakeholders.

Filtering Public Affairs Information. A critical strategy for public affairs practice is to analyze and filter information prior to internal distribution for feedback.

Using professional knowledge, the practice of filtering involves distilling public policy issues before distributing to nonpublic affairs stakeholders for feedback. Filtering public affairs information was coded at 34 data points across all case sites from nearly all public affairs participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA11, PA2, PAB1, PAB2, PAB3, PAB4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4).

As a strategy, filtering and distilling public policy information is vital (PAC2). Filtering is directly applying public affairs knowledge as part of the intraorganizational knowledge transfer process. Each case site studied uses a form of filtering prior to sending requests for nonpublic affairs stakeholder expertise. Hundreds of legislative proposals are introduced each congressional session and is imperative for public affairs to have a vetting process (PAB1, PAB2) to determine what proposed policies are relevant and important (PAC3). Filtering considers the roles of nonpublic affairs, which analyzing public policy “isn’t people’s full time jobs” (NPAB2). Echoed by PAB1, public affairs are interacting with “content experts that we are dealing with have obviously other responsibilities.”

Data pointed to filtering strategy explaining how public affairs arrive at deciding to distribute an internal request. For understanding the possibility of legislation advancing in the policymaking process, public affairs needs to “put it through our filter. I’m the government relations; I know what is possible and what is impossible” (PA2). As public affairs participant PAB3 explained, there is an “internal decision in terms of is it impactful enough?” and “based on situational awareness and your best understanding of

how the bill is going to impact the organization.” Public affairs participant PAB4 explained filtering as

Does this impact our organization? Do we have a service line or program or an entity internally that is impacted? That’s like the step one. Step two is this going anywhere? We usually do some information seeking with our lobby team is it actually going to go anywhere. If it’s not going anywhere we are not going to add a burden to our leadership with every single healthcare related bill that comes out. If it is going somewhere, that’s when we take note. And if it’s a priority.

Sometimes we are sending out information just as an FYI, this will probably pass.

At a separate case site, public affairs participant PAC1 further supported the occurrence of a filtering process prior to distributing proposed policy

So we’re looking at federal laws, federal rules, federal register seeing what comes up through associations, state registers, and state bills. It is a lot to go through. In doing that, we can’t send out everything, and there is also a balance with things that we send out if we are going to provide meaningful context on that, we can’t do that for every bill...We know it is introduced by a member that won’t go anywhere or if it’s a statement bill, we usually don’t send those out...There are some things we know as an organization we are not going to take a position on, so we don’t send those out because it would generate a lot of feedback and comments.

The process of filtering and vetting can be challenging. As one public affairs participant noted,

We might vet it and determine it's not of importance to the organization, but then there's the areas of operational changes in the scope, and things of that nature that are a little more gray area where we flagged it and then send it on to content experts in the organization to ask for their opinion whether or not it's an issue (PAB1).

As part of public affairs practice, professionals should employ a form of filtering. Depicted in Figure 6, filtering strategy ensures public policy information distributed is worthwhile and cognizant of nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Public affairs participant PAB1 illustrated the importance of engaging with intraorganizational stakeholders to "build rapport with many people in our organization that they understand I don't ask unless I think it's important." Nonpublic affairs participant NPA2 agreed with the need to filter "because you can't work on everything. You have to choose those that are going to be the most important." By sending along every proposal related to healthcare policy "the process becomes meaningless and response diminishes" (PAC2). Based on participant responses, prior to requesting intraorganizational knowledge on a policy proposal, a public affairs filter assesses various factors relevant to policymaking and politics. The assessment assists in refining a public policy proposal and uses the knowledge of public affairs to create knowledge transfer "stock." An analysis of external factors includes:

- Probability of advancement
- Political implications and realities
- Association and/or partner activity

Intraorganizational (internal) factors in the filtering process includes:

- Relevance
- Priority
- Potential impact, to the extent known

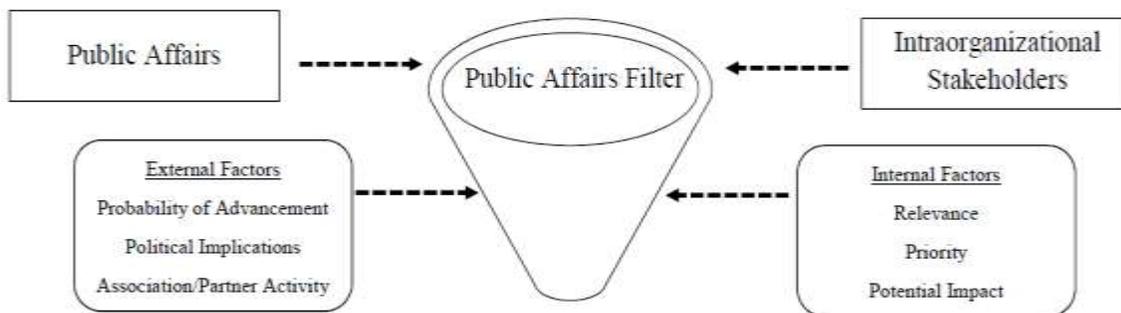


Figure 6. Public Policy Filtering Process.

Collating Intraorganizational Knowledge. There is significant value in the role nonpublic affairs stakeholders play and contribute to understanding public policy issues (PAC2). At each case site public affairs assumed the centralized role of managing public policy issues. As a conduit of facilitating intraorganizational knowledge, public affairs collects the expertise and knowledge of nonpublic affairs stakeholders, observed across all case study sites (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA7, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAC1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3). Public affairs owns the “role of the conduit” (NPAC1), “being the collator and organizer of thoughts” (NPA1) and “coordinating and keeping everybody moving in the same direction” (PAB3). Often public affairs “will facilitate pulling everything together in the one document. All of us will have them put in our respective areas of expertise, so that is really valuable” (NPA1). Participant NPAB2 explained their role as a content expert is to “bring all the insights together and then through [name omitted] on our team, they help frame the position we

ultimately take.” The importance of acting as a collator cannot be underscored, as PAB1 stated, “Without being able to pull together multiple content experts, I would never have probably gotten to the level of clarity around that issue in time prior to the passage of that bill.” Based on the data, across case sites, it is consistent practice that public affairs takes on the role and ownership of facilitating internal feedback on policy issues.

Reciprocal Interaction Strategy. Practicing reciprocation is another strategic approach to intraorganizational engagement and interaction. Aligned with bidirectional learning (and holistic knowledge transfer), reciprocation was often noted as intraorganizational relationships involving equitable two-way interaction. Reciprocation was especially observed from the perspective of nonpublic affairs stakeholders, documented in 13 participant interviews (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA8, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, NPAB2, PAB2, NPAC1).

Developing personal relationships and practicing reciprocation with intraorganizational stakeholders is critical, as public affairs may need intraorganizational stakeholder expertise on other issues in the future (PAB2). Public affairs professionals should understand relationships are a “back-and-forth...bit of give and take” (NPA1) and that reciprocal empathy is a key piece...that high level, macro, global insight and purpose and the practical side of how do we drive it, and little bit of that empathy piece to understand how policy works and not just handing it off (NPAB2).

In essence, interaction is two-way, back-and-forth (NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11). One respondent, NPA2 acknowledged relationship positivity and reinforcement, expressing that public affairs is “always just so appreciative for anything

[he/she] gets, it just reinforces to me the value of the relationship.” Thus, public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders practice and should understand interaction and knowledge transfer is reciprocal—each role in the organization needs the support and dependency of each other to effectively develop and deliver public affairs information products.

Knowledge Transfer Methods. Noted earlier in this chapter, to facilitate knowledge transfer, interaction and engagement may be either ad-hoc or consistent, and a blend of informal or formal tactics. In executing interaction on policy issues and managing the general flow of public affairs information internally, the most primary form of communication is email. Observed at 54 data points from 6 documents (Adoc1, Adoc3, Adoc10, Adoc5, Adoc6, Cdoc5) and 23 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB2, PAB3, PAB4, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4). Participant NPA1 noted, “I use email frequently...email is convenient and it’s something [he/she] needs a quick answer on something.” Email is also informal, such as a “forward asking will you take a look at this” (NPA7) or “any thoughts that you think we should include?” (NPAB2). Typically, the email interaction “not a formalized use this document kind of thing and mainly just generally speaking, it’s an e-mail” (NPA3). A tactic also used in tracking a virtual conversation is to reply-all to the initial email to establish and maintain an email reference chain (Adoc6, NPAB2, NPAC3, PAC3, PAC4).

Rather than casual, email communication may be structured to reflect a greater degree of formality. As noted in the prior section on information flow, email

communication on public policy issues may be in the form of consistently structured and scheduled weekly reports. When interacting intraorganizationally on requesting feedback, one case site communicated public policy via email more formally. The requests for input were consistently structured and formatted, asked recipients to respond in a certain way, and placed feedback into a policy tracking system (PAC3). Another participant explained that rather than a very informal email forward or 1-2 sentences with a request for input, they would structure an email on policy proposals in a consistent fashion with all pertinent information available (PAB4).

In addition to email, communication on public policy issues was also done via telephone (16 data points) and observed in 13 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, NPAB2, PA2, PAB4, PAC1). NPA4 “And so we would put our thoughts down on paper then we would have a conversation with our government programs folks.” Although communication on policy issues is “email, sometimes grab an hour in someone’s schedule and talk through what’s been found” (NPA5). At times, phone call is a better means to discuss policy issues and share knowledge rather than email (Adoc6). The use of email as a primary form of communication was supported by participant PAB4, who also noted that “sometimes a phone call where I’m frantically taking notes” or “If you need to follow-up with a conference call, that will certainly will occur just to get more information” (PA2).

The final form of communication and interaction for purposes of requesting stakeholder input were *scheduled meetings*, observed at 17 instances in 11 participants (NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPAB2, NPAB7, PAB1, PAB3, PAB6, PAC1, PAC3)

and 1 document (Adoc16). Separate from standing or recurring instances, meetings provide an opportunity to convene stakeholders and specifically discuss public policy proposals together. Participants PAC1, PAB3 and NPAB2 responded that meetings and face-to-face are a very good form of communication and interaction. PAB3 opined that “face to face interaction seems to be most effective way of communicating.” In explaining the use of meetings, public affairs individual PAC1 stated

Sometimes you are trying to coordinate a huge group of people, and there is sometimes a little bit like you are trying to figure what everyone’s role is in it. I found in terms of feedback, there’s definitely some people that want to type a lot of it through email but a lot of people it is easier if you get an initial meeting.

Public affairs participant PAB1 agreed, noting in-person interaction on issues typically outside the normal scope of public policy

turned out to affect us, but because of this collective around the table discussion, it was raised. It was really I think a successful example, because it was not only raised and brought to my attention, but all these other important people who have to be concerned about labs became aware of it at the same time. We could talk through how should we be advocating for this, as well as an organization how are we going to position ourselves to face this potential new malady. It accelerates the thought process that you have to go through when you’re dealing with changes.

In sum, the primary form of communication for transferring knowledge on public policy issues is email. Email is convenient, quick, and can rapidly reach a mass amount of recipients and include all pertinent policy information. However, some respondents

indicated preference to convene a meeting, or to communicate via telephone rather than solely rely on emailing as a means to exchange ideas and interact. Some even alluded to meetings and face-to-face interaction is the best form of communication and for knowledge sharing. This suggests that although email is commonly used, it may not be the best form of communication to facilitate knowledge transfer. Difficulties and issues with the various communication methods are further illustrated in the challenges and barriers section of this chapter.

Public Affairs Knowledge Transfer Content. When public affairs communicates public policy proposal information intraorganizationally, there are various elements included. Three patterns emerged from the data across all case sites to describe the stock shared with nonpublic affairs stakeholders: summarization of the policy proposal, identifying salient points, and including the full text of the bill or regulation. Summarization, defined as distilling and shortening proposed policy was noted at 38 data points, including 5 organizational documents and 21 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3). Similarly, another pattern was saliency, noted at 26 data points through 13 participants (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA9, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3) and 3 organizational documents (Bdoc2, Cdoc2, Cdoc5). Saliency differed from summarization, referring to the identification of the most relevant aspects of a particular public policy proposal to the organization, rather than a general summation of the entire proposal. Lengthy, complex public policy proposals (legislation and rulemaking) may include numerous provisions

relevant or irrelevant to the organization. Finally, communication also included a link or attached full text of the legislation or policy proposal, observed at NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA8, NPA9, NPA11, PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC3, and Cdoc5.

Summaries or key takeaways of public policy are a common occurrence in delivering information on proposed public policy (Adoc6, Adoc10, Adoc13, Cdoc2). As stated by PAC2, “Simply forwarding a 300 page bill would likely not generate a good response” from nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Therefore, public affairs typically distributes policy information that is “summarized so that people can wrap their heads around stuff” (PA1). Participant PA2 explained communicating a

brief synopsis, here is what the bill does, here is who supports it and here’s who doesn’t. Here’s the quick synopsis of the political pitfalls... But I always try to keep things brief. I’m a big fan of bullet points, bold out what you really want them to see. Less words is better.

Participant PAB1 agreed,

You’re dealing with a just a huge variety of issues. It’s even more important to be concise...we make it as easy as possible. We work very hard to get them a high level summary, this is the kind of political landscape on this issue, so they don’t have to think through all that themselves on their own.

Participant PAC1 continued to support this practice, usually including “a summary that is something high level, or take summaries from CMS or different associations and send those out.” Participant PAB4 typically would “send would send an

e-mail summarizing it in about two paragraphs, hopefully, usually, what the legislation generally did. Bulleting the key items, typically so that can be called out.”

As recipients of public affairs stock, nonpublic affairs participants supported this practice. Participant NPA3 stated a “summary is good instead of reading 330 pages” with NPA7 echoing public affairs usually “summarizes quite nicely what’s going on.” NPAC4 followed, “the content is usually a more user-friendly, easier to read cover letter” relating to proposed legislation or rulemaking. In addition to summaries, if available, sometimes public affairs includes a relevant news article on the policy proposal in an email to internal stakeholders for additional background (NPA4, Adoc3, Adoc16, NPA7).

Saliency is analyzing proposed policy and identifying the most relevant elements potentially impacting the organization. Participant PAC1 noted frequent “requests for “can you break this down for me” because I don’t have the bandwidth to go through it...so I would target them with a couple of specific questions to gauge whether it is important to us” as an organization. PAC2 stated it is “critical for government relations to distill down the proposal into salient points or key questions to guide a response.” Nonpublic affairs participant NPAB5 agreed that public policy “needs to be packaged” and should include some “prefatory remarks.” Public affairs participant PAB4 concurred, noting that

You have to specifically really identify, personally first, what could be the problems and present to your content experts that way... it’s kind of prepping that work, prepping the questions, prepping the response. Prepping it so you get the best response, that’s really challenging.

Nonpublic affairs participant NPA1 recognized the value of public affairs to help focus you in on the important points...distilled down to the salient points we want to focus on, maybe a summary of those with a pointing to the part of the document where those things are located are very helpful.

Other nonpublic affairs participant strongly supported this practice, noting public affairs does a “good job of dissecting and putting some of this stuff in Layman’s terms” (NPA2) and the “synopses we receive are probably the number one tool that we receive that is helpful” (NPA4) on matters of public policy.

The final theme in sharing public affairs information on proposed policy is including the *full text* of the legislation or rule. The full, unedited version of proposed public policy can span hundreds, sometimes thousands of pages of legal language. In addition to providing a summary and identifying salient points, including a web link or email attachment (NPAC1, NPAC3, Cdoc5) of the full text allows the ability to seek out the exact proposal language (PAB4) rather than solely relying on summaries. Including the full text of the proposed policy allows for nonpublic affairs stakeholders “to comment on provisions applicable to their area or function” (NPAC1).

This section outlined the elements of public affairs knowledge transfer stock. As the sender of public policy information, public affairs provides a summary, identifies salient points, and includes the full text of the proposal. All practices were supported by the receivers (nonpublic affairs stakeholders). To re-iterate, a public affairs intraorganizational strategy and tactic should not rely on “Simply forwarding a 300 page bill would likely not generate a good response” (PAC2).

Public Affairs Knowledge Transfer Receivers. When public affairs transmits requests for internal expertise on policy issues, the primary recipients serve in some form of administrative capacity (NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, NPA11, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, NPAB7, PAB1, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4). The snowballing sampling strategy used in the study asked public affairs to identify potential participants with whom interaction occurs on public policy issues. Although some nonpublic affairs participants had prior direct clinical care experience (NPA1, NPAC4) all nonpublic affairs participants in the study were currently serving in administrative functions at their respective healthcare delivery organizations. This finding logically aligns; requests for input on policy issues would be directed toward individuals having the capacity to respond. Health providers and clinicians serving in direct patient care roles on a day-to-day basis would likely be unable to consistently allocate time to respond to public policy requests.

Earlier in this chapter, Table 5 denoted the professional level of each participant in the study. Findings suggest much of the interaction occurs at the organizational management level; individuals with titles of manager or director. Across all case sites, recipients of public affairs knowledge and requests for input primarily serve in a management function (NPA1, NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, NPA11, PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC4). Requests for input “are all at management level” (PAB1) and often “target our division administrators or division medical directors” (NPA7) who “may not be at a high level of leadership” (NPA1). Other times, requests go to professionals serving under management with known expertise, as

PA2 explained, “I have my rank-and-file doctors I go to for different issues. Other providers if it’s a PT issue, there are PT’s we’ll go to, or nurses.”

Emerging from the data through cross case synthesis was public affairs sending information on policy issues to *dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders*. From a strategic perspective, dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders are considered individuals serving as a primary point of contact for receiving requests for input on policy issues, (NPA2, NPA3, NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB7, PAB2, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC3, PAC1, PAC3, Bdoc5). Nonpublic affairs stakeholders are dedicated receivers as knowledgeable on specific subject matters. Respondent NPAB2, noted “so on the quality side I become well-versed in the voluntary and mandatory requirements of policy that impacts quality improvement...and there is a dedicated person who is the lead on meaningful use” requirements. Participant PAC3 admitted the importance of, “we have to identify those individuals at the senior level who the point person is” for different functions of the organization, such as finance department and quality improvement. Leveraging dedicated stakeholders can be very advantageous to public affairs. PAC1 noted one of their intraorganizational contacts

understands the way of the legislature, and the importance of giving a solution and a quick answer. And he/she knows we want to change this, and this is how we describe it in a quick way. This is how we would describe it in a history on why we think this change is important and this is how we would describe to a legislator

As point persons, dedicated intraorganizational nonpublic affairs stakeholders can serve an important function in public affairs information strategy. Across the sites

studied, certain dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders often asked to provide input also possess *ownership and responsibility* for managing certain public policy issues. Observed at 19 data points and 11 participants (NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, NPAC1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3), some nonpublic affairs stakeholders understand their responsibility for following and analyzing certain consistent policy issues within their scope.

Commonly, ownership follows certain policymaking which typically have a consistent annual process, such as administrative rules. As public affairs participant PA1 said, “we kind of expect people to keep up on their own.” PAC1 followed with describing nonpublic affairs stakeholders “are like oh there’s a new rule out that affects us, we’re going to get everyone to work through it.” From the nonpublic affairs perspective, certain “regulatory changes, I know it’s our responsibility” (NPA6). Particular policy issues are placed on the “calendar to start watching for it” (NPA7) and departments would keep track, such as “patient financial services that would watch updates for Medicare” (NPA8). Another participant, NPAB2 preferred proactiveness, “So the minute it is either being talked about, either as a guidance or a concept, I’m reading about it.” Through building a network of dedicated stakeholders, public affairs and nonpublic affairs collaborate to understand consistent policy issues and the ownership of analyzing the issues for purposes of responding externally.

Expertise on responding to policy proposals may require dissemination beyond primary contacts. Dedicated stakeholders and even owners of certain policy issues may not possess all the content expertise necessary to analyze proposed policy in their

respective departments or functions of the healthcare delivery organization. Observed across all case sites, dedicated stakeholders contacted to provide input may need to *distribute and facilitate feedback* from other nonpublic affairs stakeholders (NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, NPAB7, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3, Cdoc4).

Disbursing policy proposals to the most appropriate content expert is critical. When public affairs interact with nonpublic affairs primary contacts, there is an understanding requests for comment will be circulated to the best stakeholders. PA2 reported this activity as “dependent on them” to diffuse the request for input if they are too busy or not the best intraorganizational content expert. Public affairs participant PAB4 characterized the information flow as “passed on to whom they think is, if they are not themselves, they will pass it along to whom and their department is the content expert.” Respondent PAC3 affirmed in that it is the, “responsibility of the manager/leader of a department that helps facilitate the flow of government relations requests to the right subject-matter expert when they aren’t the best source.”

Primary nonpublic affairs stakeholders may refer and facilitate content experts to effectively develop information products (PAC1). As a primary receiver of public affairs requests, NPAC4 stated pointedly “I will facilitate getting feedback from the operational folks to the government relations department” but “getting stakeholder input can be difficult.” Nonpublic affairs participant NPA7 supported the perspective of public affairs respondents, stating that when receiving requests for input, “I reach out to the operations managers to see if they want to comment. I’ll reach out to them to say this is what we

think, what do you think from operations?” NPAB5 described the practice of further distribution and follow-up as

I’ll take a look at it and I’ll reach out to the specific areas who have expertise. If it’s systems operability that might want to comment a certain way, I’ll reach out to [name omitted] area or different areas if it’s medication-based. Wherever we can gather expertise if I don’t know the information, then we’ll tabulate our responses.

In sum, in healthcare delivery organizations sampled, nonpublic affairs recipients of public affairs information stock serve in an administrative capacity primarily at the management level. Public affairs communicates requests for input on policy issues to often dedicated intraorganizational stakeholders in roles where policy is expected to impact. Some dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders assume ownership and responsibility on certain consistent policy issues impacting their department or healthcare service line. As the primary recipients of public affairs requests, dedicated stakeholders may need to further distribute to other nonpublic affairs stakeholders for input. This action is performed when primary nonpublic affairs contacts do not have the specific expertise to effectively respond to the inquiry.

Nonpublic Affairs Knowledge Transfer Products. Continuing with a process perspective, analyzing and sending knowledge back to public affairs may take different forms and employ various strategies and tactics. Data indicates formatting and transferring knowledge to public affairs are primarily brief summaries and extracts. But

public policy proposals with greater perceived complexity and impact on the organization appear to result in more formality, structure, and group response interaction.

As described earlier, the primary form of communication facilitating knowledge transfer is email. Via email, transferring nonpublic affairs knowledge back to public affairs is in the form of *brief extracts* (PA1, PA2, NPA3, NPA5, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAC3, NPAC2, Adoc6, Adoc7, Arec3, Cdoc3). Public affairs participant PA1 detailed content expertise received as “Snippets. No one really writes long paragraphs about different issues. Unless there’s a lot of information there that they can put their hands on quickly...those little snippets of information you get, a lot of those are high valued comments.” Organizational documents (Adoc6, Adoc7) illustrated interaction on policy issues via email, where nonpublic affairs stakeholders are providing short pieces of feedback on proposed policy.

Summaries are often knowledge products transferred to public affairs. NPA5 outlined feedback as “I’ll distribute a summary with my findings” to public affairs. Participant PAB1 affirmed this practice, noting that nonpublic affairs stakeholders “At the end when they are giving their decision and they’re providing their opinion, often times it’s a few paragraphs at most. Sometimes it includes data, it all kind of depends on the issue.” Participant PA2 characterized knowledge received from nonpublic affairs “varies. It’s typically an email back with an analysis. There’s a couple paragraphs of an analysis on what they think. Sometimes longer, sometimes it’s less.”

Nonpublic affairs stakeholders providing knowledge is often brief and informal. Participants PAB3, NPA3, and NPAC2 portrayed informality in the knowledge transfer

process. PAB3 explained feedback to public affairs is usually “quick, pointed” with “here’s our thoughts on it. Here’s our position, our opinion” (NPA3). NPAC2 agreed supplying reactions as “Typically it is informal, low-key feedback...Very little of my expertise is related in any formal matter.” Participant PAB4 affirmed, “I occasionally get literature, but it’s really most often e-mail in the end.” Finally, PAC3 expressed feedback is generated from nonpublic affairs as an email response with a citation to the public policy proposal section in reference.

Although assessments may be brief extracts, the development of responses to public affairs is often a group effort. *Committees or groups* are necessary to effectively transfer knowledge on proposed policy to public affairs (NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAB7, PAB2, PAB6, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3, NPAB7, Adoc14). Participant PAB3 described committees as

Some are formal. Then some that are more ad-hoc, not official working groups, but your peers, your colleagues. You know informally that they have an interest or impact, and expertise in that particular subject or issue. There’s formal committees, there’s informal committees.

Furthermore, participant NPAC4 explained providing feedback as “I do not work with that in a vacuum—I work with other clinical and administrative experts, depending on the nature of the bill or proposal.” Using committees and groups for developing feedback may be consistently scheduled meetings (PAC1, PA2, PAC3, PAB1, PAB2, NPAB7) or standing committees created “that are responsible for the different subject matters...that we assign certain issues to” (PAB3). NPAB4 explained the importance of

working in teams: “It’s not just one person saying this is what our position should be, you want to get everyone’s opinion, and then come to a decision as to what’s best for the organization.” NPA4 replied analyzing policy and providing comments as “a collection of individuals internally that are identifying what will mean for the business and again whether we want or something is important enough to raise up.”

Sometimes the size and complexity of proposed policy requires greater coordination, structure, and stakeholder management. Increased formality and structure associated with greater perceived size, scope, and impact of proposed policy. NPAB2 explained the nature of public policy as “I would say bigger it is, the more structure.” NPAC4 suggested

Depending on the extent of the proposal, I might set up a review committee and government relations will join us for those...setting up a committee really depends on the size and scope of the issue. Over the past three years, the inpatient and outpatient proposed rules and final rules mainly set up a review committee.

Participant PAB4 recalled a significant project involving proposed changes to building permits that resulted in creation of a special team: “We assembled this team of construction people, our external engineers, our construction manager group, our public affairs department, sometimes internal communications department, and our hospital president for that entity that is responsible for the building project.” PAC3 followed describing the use of committees and the perceived public policy impact as “Issues don’t go to this committee unless it is significant.”

The greater the perceived impact of public policy indicates greater intraorganizational formality. Responses to proposed policy with potential impact at a high level aligns with more structure, group work, and organization. Theoretical implications suggest greater structure and formality in generating a public affairs information products occurs with high perceived impact. This intriguing evidence indicates additional inquiry is necessary to further illustrate and confirm this explanation.

Information Product Review. After receiving input from nonpublic affairs stakeholders, public affairs integrates their expertise into an information product. The knowledge received (brief extracts and/or group responses) are then compiled into an information product, such as a comment letter or testimony. Prior to final approval (decision-making process described in the next section) and delivery of the information product, nonpublic affairs stakeholders providing input ordinarily have the opportunity to review (PA1, PA2, NPA1, Adoc6, Adoc17, Cdoc2, NPAB2, PAB2, PAC1).

Information product review allows nonpublic affairs stakeholders to ensure their expertise was integrated accurately. Public affairs professional PA1 noted “you don’t want to give it to them so that they have to rewrite it themselves” but allow an opportunity to review and provide additional comments if necessary. Re-circulation to stakeholders is performed “Almost always. Unless it’s pretty clear that it’s slight modifications, then I won’t bother then with everything, grammatical or changes that are slight and not technical in nature” (PA2). Nonpublic affairs participant NPAB2 agreed,

If we provide input, we are part of the email chain from them. We’ll share it ‘okay here’s our early draft of the response, any comments?’ And you have an

opportunity to respond back or say, 'hey it looks good.' Then they'll send us working drafts as it plays around for a little bit, and then we'll see a final draft."

PAC1 further supported the practice of stakeholder review in crafting information products:

I put together a draft...I send to them. Even if it's things such as 'I don't know if this is what we mean, I don't if this is right' because it's just much easier for people to take something and be like 'no, that's not what I said, I want to do this instead.' Whereas if you asked someone to create that, that is more of a commitment and takes more of their time. But people are more willing to edit something.

In sum, stakeholder review is a tactic used by public affairs to ensure information product accuracy. Contributing to information strategy decision-making, public affairs practice suggests nonpublic affairs stakeholders providing input will have the opportunity to review the information product prior to final approval and delivery. The review strategy ensures expertise provided by internal experts is integrated effectively and factually.

Public Affairs decision-making process

The decision-making process for approving public affairs information products aligned similarly to how the function was structured within organizations. Despite replication logic, as with public affairs structure questions, themes and patterns spreading across all sites for decision-making were quite limited. Case sites B and C had more steps and hierarchy to decision-making, while site A continued to rely on the principal leader

for approving public affairs information products. There also was evidence channeling to variation in decision-making based on issue dependency in sites B and C.

The primary cross-cutting pattern was the almost exclusive use of nonpublic affairs stakeholders as the final information product approver. Out of the 21 applicable public records reviewed, 19 were signed by a nonpublic affairs member of the organization. The use of nonpublic affairs stakeholders to provide final approval of information products provides evidence to suggest consistent practice. The only two public records signed by a member of the public affairs team were at case site C (Crec2, Crec7). Table 8 illustrates the breakdown and references to collected public affairs information products by signer to demonstrate the final decision.

Table 8

Decision-making of public affairs information products

	Site A	Site B	Site C	Total
Public Affairs Signature			Crec2 Crec7	2
Nonpublic Affairs Signature	Arec4 Arec5 Arec6 Arec7	Brec1 Brec2 Brec3 Brec4 Brec5 Brec6 Brec7 Brec8 Brec9 Brec10	Crec1 Crec3 Crec4 Crec5 Crec6	19
Not Applicable	Arec1 Arec2 Arec3			3
Public Records	7	10	7	24

Note: Not Applicable are public records that are not signed by anyone at the organization case site.

Case sites B and C had some limited cross-cutting patterns in their decision-making process for information products. The decision-maker at site B was usually a member of the executive leadership team, comprised primarily of c-suite and vice presidents (PAB1, PAB4). Following the review of the senior vice president of government and community relations, the specific senior leader providing final approval and signature was aligned with downstream services most impacted by the proposed bill or rule (Bdoc3, Brec1, Brec2, Brec3, Brec4, Brec6, Brec7, Brec8, Brec9, Brec10, PAB1, PAB2, PAB4). Site C decision-making process varied (PAC1) and appeared to be issue-dependent (NPAC4, PAC3). Most information products were approved by nonpublic affairs at the executive leadership, management or director level (Crec1, Crec3, Crec4, Crec5, Crec6, PAC1). But as a public affairs participant noted, “there’s a lot of navigating, so I would say it’s difficult to have a good system to do that” and “those decisions more kind of go to leadership, in a disorganized way” (PAC1).

Data analysis provides evidence that case site A diverges in both public affairs structure and decision-making. With direct access to the CEO, all information products generated by case site A were usually reviewed, approved, and signed by the CEO (Arec4, Arec5, Arec6, Arec7, PAC2). In the past, site A organized a public policy committee, playing a key role in the decision-making process of public affairs policy issues, positions, and information products (PAC2). However, participant PAC2 noted

the organization is now moving away from direct decision-making authority to more of an informal advisory role (Adoc11).

The use of a standing group or committee decision-making pointed more toward an advisory function. Case site C has a standing strategy and planning committee comprised of senior leaders that serves as a strategic function for the organization, including public policy issues (NPAC3). Significant, sensitive or issues driving internal conflict are then introduced, discussed, and resolved at the senior leadership level, but only when necessary (PAC3). Site B uses the executive leadership team as the decision-making level, but is oriented toward individuals rather than the group as a whole (PAB1, PAB4). While site A in the past had a standing oversight committee (PAC2), none of the sites currently have a specified government relations oversight group providing direct decision-making authority. The use of organizational groups or committees in feedback and intraorganizational knowledge transfer is further discussed in the interaction and engagement section of this chapter.

Intraorganizational barriers

Challenges pertaining to intraorganizational engagement and interaction were addressed primarily through interview data. Although some issues overlapped, barriers to effective internal collaboration primarily differed from the perspectives of public affairs and nonpublic affairs participants (Figure 7). From the perspective of nonpublic affairs stakeholders, cross-case themes relating to barriers to effective collaboration related to organizational dynamics (time, conflict of opinion, follow-up, prioritization) and challenges with public policy information itself (volume, complexity, ambiguity). Public

affairs participants also noted issues with conflict of opinion/knowledge and prioritization. In addition, public affairs noted responsiveness, finding the right knowledge stakeholder, organizational perspective, and understanding how public affairs actually functions.

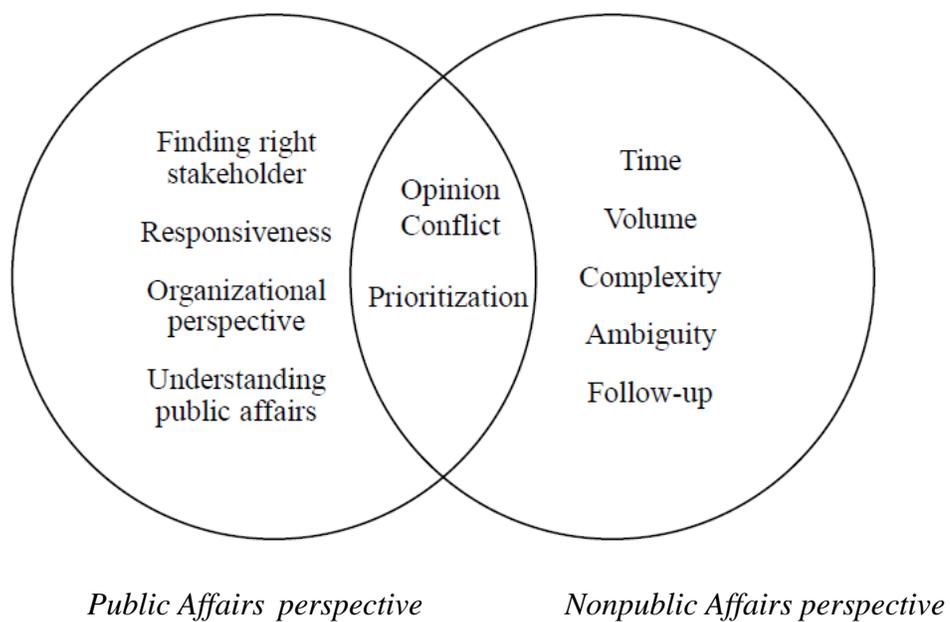


Figure 7. Barriers by participant perspective.

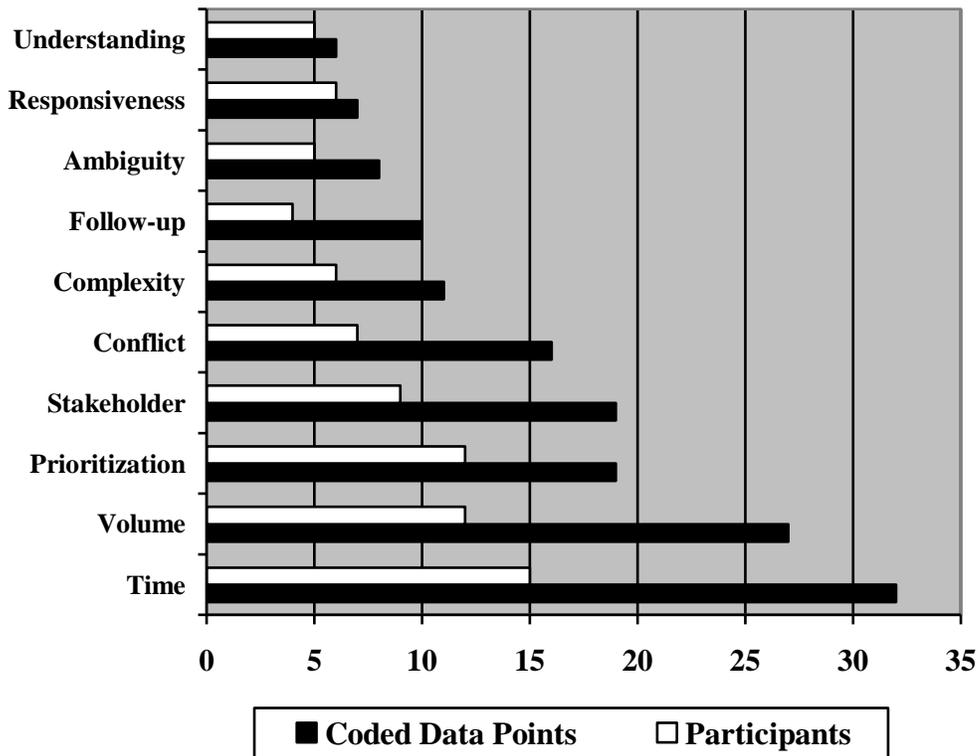


Figure 8. Frequency chart of barriers.

Time. Finding sufficient time to respond to public policy issues was the primary challenge identified by nonpublic affairs. The lack of time was observed at 32 data points throughout interview responses by 12 nonpublic affairs participants across all case sites (NPA1, NPA2, NPA5, NPA6, NPA9, NPA11, NPAB4, NPAB5, NPAB7, NPAC3, NPAC4). NPAB5 responded “So it really requires my attention, but added to the list of many things that require time and attention and probably more urgent attention.” The overarching issues with time were illustrated best by participants NPA1 and NPA9:

I think the other thing is strictly time. I mean there’s proposed rules and changes and things coming all the time. You could literally spend your day staying educated on how things are changing in healthcare it is happening so fast. So it’s

difficult to find the time to sit down and say ok, I'm going to really study this.

(NPAB1)

Time constraints. Anymore for me its just timing. We run very short on resources so I can have major transactions occurring or be out of the office and some of these bills can require time be pretty tough to review and comment on. Given workloads, time is the major constraint to fill in and just trying to getting back to [public affairs] a response back in a timely manner. (NPA9)

Interestingly, the issue of time constraints experienced by nonpublic affairs stakeholders was acknowledged and affirmed by public affairs participants (PA1, PAB1 PA2, PAC1, PAC4). Nonpublic affairs are busy, have many responsibilities, and time is valuable (PA1, PA2). PAC1 noted "there's others that have a lot of other things going on, responding to proposals isn't something that they are able to fit in easily with their other duties." PAC4 agreed, "It is important to be respectful of the roles and responsibilities of internal stakeholders that requesting input on public policy takes time away from." The lack of time as an intraorganizational barrier to effective knowledge sharing was acknowledged by nonpublic affairs stakeholders and public affairs participants affirmed their awareness of the problem.

Volume. Observed at 27 points from 12 nonpublic affairs participants (NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA7, NPA8, NPA11, NPAB2, NPAB5, NPAC3), responses pointed to the high amount of information on public policy proposals and number of emails as a challenge. "The whole process is a challenge just from a volume perspective" (NPA4) and "a bit overwhelming" (NPAC3). NPA3 agreed, "Large volume is one of the

biggest things” along with a “significant amount of documentation” (NPA4). NPA11 echoed the sentiment “The volume of data is a very big challenge. And trying to get through it all to determine what’s really the impact.” Regarding email communication, “There is so many emails in your inbox with the amount of information it is impossible to keep up” (NPAC3). Finally, participant NPA5 lamented “You might have to read through 30 pages to find two paragraphs that actually apply.”

Prioritization. Aligning public policy issues with organizational priorities and those of nonpublic affairs stakeholders was observed as a barrier in all three case sites by 11 participants (PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB4, PAC1, NPA8, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, NPAC2, NPAC3). Identifying priorities as a challenge or barrier from the data were difficult because prioritization also contributes toward answering the primary research question on engagement and interaction. In addition, prioritization issues were observed in both public affairs and nonpublic affairs participants.

As a barrier, prioritizing responses for intraorganizational feedback requests was sometimes unaligned. Prioritization conflict appears to be amongst the balance and placement of tasks required and work flow by nonpublic affairs. In describing nonpublic affairs stakeholders, one public affairs participant noted that public policy just sometimes “doesn’t rise to their priority level” (PA2). Nonpublic affairs stakeholders also acknowledged the challenge, as NPA8 stated “sometimes policy just goes to the back” and NPAB2 described the problem as “how do you prioritize all of these [policy issues]? We cannot respond to every last one.” NPAB5 further described the challenge, adding that “So it really requires my attention, but added to the list of many things that require

time and attention, and probably more urgent attention.” NPA9 agreed, noting “you need to prioritize the request because at the moment, the last two years have been we are all super busy.”

In recognizing this dynamic, participant PA1 described a tactic used to address prioritization differences:

Sometimes you have to break stuff down to people to what the reason why you’re calling them. Asking for information is important because, the CEO and I were in talking to a congressman about this particular issue and the CEO told me that you are the person who knows more about this than anybody else. (PA1)

However, there is not always conflict regarding priorities when public affairs requests feedback. As nonpublic affairs participant NPAC1 stated, “When asked by government relations to respond to a policy or rule, the request becomes the highest priority task.” Although this individual stakeholder places a very high value on public affairs activities, this doesn’t necessarily represent a consistent reality faced by public affairs professionals.

Prioritization issues were also described in relation to public policy issues rather than task placement. At times, public policy issues may be important to specific internal stakeholders, but minimal to the organization as a whole (PAB4). As nonpublic affairs respondent NPAC2 stated, “There are many concepts and notions that I consider to be crucial, and if you were to ask my government relations colleagues, they would not put those on their list.” In managing the challenge with competing public policy priorities, a public affairs participant described the challenge as

One of the trickiest things is priorities. We are a very large organization, we could have 30 million priorities, top priorities. This is one of my biggest challenges. Do I let them [nonpublic affairs stakeholders] go off and talk to legislators themselves? We all deal with political capital here. I have a certain amount of political capital that I can use. Every time that someone is using [organization name omitted] to do something, you are using a little bit of that political capital. We all do a ton of political stuff which helps build that capital even more, so kind of always drawing down on it. I'm very cognizant about that. I'll tell people, you just kind of bite it, it's not a priority. It's not a favorite thing to do, but it happens. We generally try to at least do a minimum of information gathering, let people know, yes we are supportive on this. A lot of different levels that we are just monitoring, then there is like going out and working on something. In the end you can't go screaming with your hand on fire with every issue. (PA2)

Finding the right stakeholder. The selected healthcare delivery organization case sites each employed between 6,000 and 32,000 individuals. The size and complexity of the organizations studied demonstrated challenges for public affairs participants. Locating the most appropriate nonpublic affairs stakeholder to answer questions and provide analytics on proposed policy issues was identified as a problem at 19 data points, 7 public affairs participants (PA2, PAB2, PAB3, PAB4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3) across all case sites. This problem included determining the individual, department or service line where nonpublic affairs stakeholders reside which possess embedded expertise useful for

understanding the impact of public policy issues. Finding the right stakeholder emerged as the primary challenge for public affairs participants.

Public affairs participant PAB4 highlighted the issue, responding that “challenges are finding the right people, and including all the right people and that you are consulting everyone.” PAC2 also noted, “At times, there are challenges on who should know and be consulted on public policy matters. Should a proposal go to three stakeholders or a dozen? This is sometimes ambiguous.” Other participants also agreed, “the tricky part is just knowing where to go to” (PA2) and “who should know and be consulted” (PAB2) or not knowing “exactly who’s in charge in doing what at this point” (PAB3). From the perspective of nonpublic affairs stakeholders, commenting on proposed policy on their own was how their department and public affairs came together (NPAC4). In addition to interview data, two documents (Cdoc4, Cdoc5) provided additional support to the interviews. Both Cdoc4 and Cdoc5 were copies of emails, included text requesting nonpublic affairs recipients to forward the email information to others that they believe should know about the proposed legislation. The email documentation further suggests public affairs do not know which stakeholder(s) should receive information on proposed policy for feedback purposes.

One public affairs participant lamented at the consequences of not including an important stakeholder in the internal policy feedback process, highlighting the importance of stakeholder input.

There was a bill that we worked on last session that ended up not passing at the last minute because one internal constituency that I didn’t know about that wanted

to kill the bill. If it was sent to one additional person internally, I would have known that ahead of time. (PAC3)

To address the challenge, PA2 stated assistance received from an experienced member of the organization to help navigate the different departments and responsibilities. Assistant helped the participant learn where to seek knowledge, stating “If you don’t know and have that lead-in, it’s a tricky thing to do” (PA2). Another public affairs department at site C created an ongoing list of nonpublic affairs stakeholders by topics and area of expertise (PAC1, PAC3). The idea of an internal list was pondered by a public affairs participant at site B, who said perhaps “Developing a ‘family tree’ of subject-matter experts would be helpful to understand who to go to for feedback” (PAB2). However, two participants at site C acknowledged an ongoing challenge, even with keeping a list about how big the number of recipients should be on proposed policy issues (PAC1, PAC3). But nonpublic affairs participant NPAC3 appreciated the broadness of those receiving information on public policy. Thus, the development and application of the stakeholder list appears to be mixed, as

In theory the way it works is we have a big list known as the internal consultant directory. On there we put different topic areas, 340B or hospital payment, or ACO’s and we have a group that is identified as leaders in that area or people would like to be involved in a response. And we’ve really gone back and forth in terms of how big that list should be. (PAC1)

Conflict. When providing input on public policy from a variety of stakeholders, there is bound to be disagreement on the perceived impact to the organization. Four

nonpublic affairs participants (NPA4, NPA8, NPA9, NPAC4), three public affairs participants (PA2, PAB2, PAC3) and one document artifact (Adoc6) through all three case sites responded that conflict occasionally provided a challenge to providing feedback. Most notably, disagreements occurred between the perceived impact of proposed policy to the healthcare delivery organization.

A public affairs respondent acknowledged this conflict, noting “Sometimes internal disagreement occurs between content experts, and with external associations” (PAB2). Another discussed the process of providing feedback, and a fellow stakeholder entering the discussion near the deadline disagreeing with a position on an issue previously vetted (NPAC4). Participant NPA4 outlined issues with organizational disagreement by stating “And that’s again where there can be conflict because when something is more onerous on a particular department their obviously the ones the most concerned about that particular regulation.” At worst, “their position may be completely opposite of the organization’s and creates a conflicting dynamic between the representation and interest of the organization,” (PAC3) creating a significant problem for effective public affairs external engagement. Therefore, occasionally due to conflict of opinion regarding the perceive policy impact, or when proposed policy negatively impacts one aspect of the organization at the expense of another, the organization then typically does not take a position (NPA8) or addresses the issue at senior leadership (PAC3).

Complexity. Public policy proposals may be very difficult to comprehend, analyze or assess. Challenges regarding the complexity of public policy issues were

coded at 11 instances and observed in 5 nonpublic affairs participants in 2 of the 3 case sites (NPA1, NPA2, NPA4, NPAC1, NPAC3). One participant identified the boundary spanning nuances of proposed policy, “As healthcare is so complex, some policy can impact multiple parts of the organization” (NPAC3). Another respondent noted the way proposed legislation is crafted lends to operational complexity: “the legalize of the document makes it difficult to read” (NPA1). Participant NPA4 agreed, describing public policy as “often very difficult to wade through” and NPAC1 affirmed, saying “Details are important in financial analytics, so often requires time to dig through long, complex regulations to find the language impacting reimbursement.” A public affairs participant also chimed in that some stakeholders appear to lack the policy acumen to understand legislation and do not want to deal with those issues (PAC3).

Follow-up. Communicating the outcome of interaction on policy proposals was a shortfall. In regards to internal engagement and knowledge transfer on policy proposals, 3 nonpublic affairs stakeholders (one from each case site) expressed a challenge with follow-up (NPA9, NPAB2, NPAC3). Specifically, the intraorganizational interaction process is usually oriented around a policy proposal, and nonpublic affairs professionals responded identifying a gap in the providing feedback and the final outcome. One participant stated “there isn’t a circle-back of what ultimately happened with the law, rule, or policy” (NPAB2). Another nonpublic affairs respondent also noted the lack of follow-up and suggested “Policy outreach before and after—before policy has gone through the process and then once the policy is finalized” (NPAC3). As such, nonpublic affairs participant NPA9 recommended “closing the communication loop and providing

more timely updates/feedback on matters is my main recommendation.” As an improved practice for public affairs, providing a follow-up notification once the proposed rule is finalized or legislation becomes law would be helpful for nonpublic affairs participants that provide input on the proposal.

Ambiguity. The conceptual nature of proposed public policy often lacks specifics. The challenge is rather than providing a clear path toward determining impact to the organization, proposed policy creates more questions than answers, and creates frustration for nonpublic affairs stakeholders asked to analyze and provide input to public affairs. The ambiguity of proposed policy was coded 8 times and observed in 3 nonpublic affairs participants in two case sites (NPAB7, NPAC1, NPAC3). Proposed public policy may be very conceptual, and developing impact analyses can be very difficult when legislation lacks substantive details (NBA&, NPAC1) and may be even, “impossible to estimate” (NPAC3). As participant NPAB7 noted, “the proposal(s) themselves are often incomplete and may need to take assumptions into consideration.”

Responsiveness. An early step in the process of obtaining feedback on proposed policy is to request nonpublic affairs stakeholders to weigh in. Challenges with receiving timely feedback was observed in each case site from three public affairs participants (PA2, PAB4, PAC3). As one public affairs participant noted, “sometimes there is a lack of response” (PAC3). Two nonpublic affairs participants agreed, “A lot of people are busy, and getting them to respond can be a challenge” (NPAC4) and “the only issue I really have is getting comments back timely” (NPA7).

However, the intensity of responsiveness as a major problem for public affairs appeared low. Although “responsiveness can be an issue...I would say a lot time it’s within a day or two. I’m actually impressed with the responsiveness” (PA2). While participant PAB4 stated “we don’t always get the responses back immediately,” PAB3 countered feedback is typically received “within a day.” In addition, PAB1 acknowledged “whom we rely on to provide us input, they are very quick to get back to us.” Although public affairs participants identified issues of responsiveness to inquiries on proposed public policy as a problem, they also countered their observations by downplaying the significance of the problem. In some instances, public affairs participants praised the time nonpublic affairs responded to policy issues, appearing to suggest the challenge occasionally occurs.

Understanding public affairs. The role and function of public affairs focuses on public policy issues across all aspects of the healthcare delivery organizations (PA2, PAB6). Primarily from the perspective of public affairs, four participants responded (PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB4) with challenges interacting with nonpublic affairs stakeholders who lack an understanding of how public affairs functions. Participant PAB1 described how some understand how public affairs works while others do not: “It’s in their blood and then there are those who don’t understand. I think it’s an important responsibility and priority of myself to educate leaders on how that works” (PAB1). Another public affairs participant was a bit more pointed on the issue, describing the task of “Constantly addressing frankly terrible questions about government policy...they don’t get the government world, they don’t get messaging” (PAB4). Even a nonpublic affairs

participant acknowledged this issue. “I honestly believe more of our leaders than most probably don’t understand the entire policymaking process and all the working components behind it” (NPAB2). PA2 noted issues with understanding the public affairs role, such as a “COO that doesn’t understand government relations, it can be a challenge.” While describing the interaction with very educated professionals in the healthcare organization, public affairs participant PA1 surmised

they are very smart people that pretty much think they’ve got the world by the short hairs, and they can do anything they put their mind to. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that they understand what’s going on in Congress.

In sum, barriers to effective engagement, interaction and knowledge transfer were provided from the perspective of public and nonpublic affairs participants. Some barriers overlapped in participant responses, but most were dependent on their organizational role. Figure 5 depicts the barriers by public and nonpublic affairs, with the perceived strength and frequency of the identified challenges in Figure 8. Understanding barriers from various perspective aids in developing strategies and tactics for effectively facilitating intraorganizational knowledge transfer on public policy issues.

Utilizing nonpublic affairs knowledge

Obtaining and using the expertise of nonpublic affairs stakeholders is critical to effective information strategy (PAC4). The final research subquestion sought to understand how nonpublic affairs knowledge was used and integrated into information strategies. Using the structure, process, and outcome framework, the information product serves as the final outcome. Public affairs information products can come in a variety of

forms including letters, testimony, reports, data analytics, and research (Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bigelow, Arndt, & Stone, 1997; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 2002; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lord, 2000; Schuler et al., 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006).

The importance of integrated content expertise into information strategy and products was underscored by a public affairs study participant

They play a very important role, because myself and my team are not the content experts. We shouldn't be defining the position of the organization from that level of expertise. What we offer is a political lens of the consequences of taking a position, to benefit that essential cost politically, as well as from our reputation and branding perspective...we work in tandem with our experts on the front lines to ensure that they fully understand the issue at hand, so that they can make educated decisions on the recommendation. (PAB1)

As the information output, across all case sites, public affairs obtained and integrated the knowledge into various products, including:

- Talking points for an upcoming in-person meeting with policymakers and staff (Adoc5, Adoc17)
- Points of emphasis for an upcoming conference call meeting with regulatory officials (Adoc1, Adoc3)
- Written letters in response to proposed public policy (Adoc6, Adoc7, Crec2, Crec7, Arec4, Arec5, Arec6, Arec7, Brec1, Brec2, Brec3, Brec4, Brec5, Brec6, Brec7, Brec8, Brec9, Brec10, Crec1, Crec3, Crec4, Crec5, Crec6)

- Public response to a released study (Adoc5)
- Media interview points of emphasis (Bdoc2, Bdoc4)
- Prepared media statements (Bdoc3)

Nonpublic affairs stakeholders are often consulted to provide feedback on public policy issues. Across all case sites 7 respondents and 2 documents noted public affairs lead the drafting of various information pieces, ask for input, and integrates nonpublic affairs knowledge into a cohesive product used to respond to proposed public policy (Adoc6, Cdoc2, NPA4, NPAB2, NPAC1, NPAC2, PA2, PAC1, PAC3). Public affairs participant PAC1 stated the integration of nonpublic affairs knowledge is often directly edited into draft letters to be eventually delivered to policymakers.

Reviewing public records illustrated the final outcome. Specific information and tacit knowledge was embedded throughout numerous public records. One experienced nonpublic affairs participant serving as an organizational consultant indicated a teaching and learning process with public affairs reflected through the integration of his/her knowledge into draft public policy comment letters (NPAC2). Coded as content expertise, 18 public records demonstrated the integration of technical and very specific knowledge (Arec3, Arec4, Arec6, Arec7, Brec2, Brec3, Brec4, Brec5, Brec6, Brec7, Brec8, Brec9, Brec10, Crec1, Crec3, Crec4, Crec5, Crec6) appearing to be unlikely possessed by a public affairs professional.

As previously noted, 19 public records were approved and signed by nonpublic affairs organizational representatives. Public records demonstrated a wide range of

specific healthcare policy topics and regulations, including feedback responses and knowledge sharing pertaining to:

- medical care coding for procedures and diagnostic related groups (Arec4, Arec6, Arec7, Brec3, Brec6; Crec6)
- patient discharge procedures and care transition (Brec1, Brec3)
- measures of healthcare quality and patient risk (Brec2, Brec3, Brec4, Brec6; Crec1; Crec2; Crec5; Crec7)
- medical and case review (Brec4)
- medical care payment policy to providers and hospitals (Brec4, Brec6, Brec9, Brec10; Crec1; Crec2; Crec3; Crec5; Crec6)
- healthcare insurance programs (Crec4; Crec7)
- prescription drug pricing (Brec8)
- managed care organization policy (Crec3)
- electronic health record policy and standards (Brec7, Brec9)

Conclusion

Chapter 4 described the completion of the multiple case study. Using purposeful sampling, three healthcare delivery sites were selected. Through snowball sampling, participants ($n = 29$) included public affairs professionals ($n = 11$) and nonpublic affairs stakeholders ($n = 18$). Out of the 29 participants, 20 held titles in roles considered management. As the primary source of data, interviews were transcribed and disseminated for member validation. Secondary sources included organizational documents ($n = 26$) and public records ($n = 24$). Journaling aided research management.

With the exception of some minor challenges with questioning sequence in the beginning of the study and six participants refusing audio recording, the data collection plan and execution strongly aligned.

Data collection and analysis were often concurrent. Data analysis products involved memos, coding, code families, quotes, and case study reports. Each case site served as an individual unit of analysis prior to cross-case synthesizing. All data were transferred into text and uploaded to Atlas ti. CAQDAS to assist with analyses. Each case site was coded using a ground-up approach and the code families were categorized by each research question. Patterns and themes emerged through data analysis and were combined into a cross-case synthesis aligned with each research question.

Research trustworthiness was supported by specific strategies and tactics. The primary strategy was triangulation of data, case sites, and participants providing evidence of credibility, confirmability, and dependability. I collected interviews across three case sites, and included public affairs and nonpublic affairs participants. Using more than a single case site supports patterns and themes greater than one site, and I collected three sources of data. Coding procedures were documented and included in Appendix H, with all raw data accessible in a case study database to support confirmability and dependability. Generating a rich, thick description of the case sites, provided through case reports provided research depth and transferability. Credibility was further supported with respondent validation. Each participant was provided via email a transcript or interview notes for review.

Following set-up and completion, the results of the study were presented in detail. Rather than presenting sequentially as outlined in Chapter 3, the results were organized by structure (public affairs structure), process (intraorganizational engagement, decision-making, barriers), and outcome perspective (using nonpublic affairs knowledge). Each section provided a descriptive and explanatory answers to the research questions, aided with figures and tables.

Questions inquiring on the structure of public affairs revealed limited cross-case themes. Two of the three case sites had some similarities in organizing public affairs under an administrative division in their respective healthcare delivery organizations. Assigning specific roles and policy portfolios in each case site also differed, along with nomenclature to identify the function. Vast structural differences across case sites suggests the lack of consistency in organizing or best way to organize a public affairs function. What appeared to be functioning effectively in case site A may not be effective in case sites C or B, and vice versa.

The core of the study followed with the primary research question on engagement and interaction. Numerous cross-case patterns ensued. From a public affairs perspective, intraorganizational stakeholder engagement overall is an art, explained through bidirectional learning as overarching patterns. Internal interaction facilitating knowledge transfer is ad-hoc or consistent, through a blend of formal and informal methods. The general flow of public affairs information distributed to mass recipients intraorganizationally also follows ad-hoc or consistent patterns. Specific products include health policy and political news articles, and updates on relevant public policy matters.

The study's core purpose was to understand how public affairs engages and interacts intraorganizationally in developing information products. The primary research question was presented through a funnel approach and process framework. Internal interaction on public policy proposals typically starts with public affairs requesting input, but inquiries may also originate from intraorganizational stakeholders. Regardless of engagement origination, public affairs employs filter to determine the extent to which public policy proposals merit the need for distributing intraorganizationally. Tactics for public policy filtering strategies included an assessment of internal and external factors. Building on filtering, public affairs assumes the primary role of collating intraorganizational expertise in providing input on policy proposals through reciprocation strategy.

Communication methods for knowledge transfer is primarily email. However, respondents indicated greater value in sharing information and knowledge through in-person meetings and phone conversations. When public affairs request input from nonpublic affairs stakeholders, the content of the communication should include a summary, salient points, and full text of the proposed bill or rule. Recipients of the requests for input are often dedicated intraorganizational stakeholders serving in an administrative capacity at the management level. As a strategy, public affairs send requests to dedicated individuals on policy issues impacting their department or service line, and further relying on those primary contacts to disseminate requests to others in their respective departments as needed to respond. Knowledge provided by stakeholders to public affairs on policy proposals is often informal, brief extracts of feedback.

However, committees, teams and groups may be gathered to understand and respond to policy issues, suggesting more formality and structure when the perceived impact of proposed policy is high.

Public affairs integrates the knowledge of internal stakeholders in crafting information products. Used to influence public policy, information products included regulatory comment letters, testimony, media responses, and meeting talking points. Topics from information products included a range of issues, further supporting the boundary spanning function of public affairs. As a practice tactic, public affairs furnishes intraorganizational stakeholders who provided input the opportunity to review drafts information products before external delivery. Final decision-making processes for information products largely differed across case sites, but the nearly all were approved by someone not serving in public affairs.

Knowledge transfer processes for developing public affairs information products was met with barriers. From the perspective of public affairs participants, primary challenges were finding the right stakeholder was primary challenge, along with the lack of, responsiveness, organizational perspective, and understanding the function of public affairs. Nonpublic affairs respondents overwhelming identified time constraints and volume of information as the top barriers. Shared strongly by both public and nonpublic affairs participants were task prioritization issues.

Chapter 4 provided a comprehensive illustration of the multiple case site study. Patterns and themes answered the research questions and were presented in relation and alignment to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter 5 builds on the results

of the study with interpretation of the findings to the existing literature and theory.

Chapter 5 also acknowledges study shortcomings, support positive social change, provide recommendations for public affairs practice, and identify areas for further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation was to study the intraorganizational development of public affairs information strategies. Providing information to policymakers is a common strategy in public affairs, but how strategies are developed intraorganizationally was unclear. Through knowledge transfer theory and a process-based conceptual framework, a qualitative design and case study methodology was applied. To fulfill the literature gap, data were collected on how internal engagement and interaction between public and nonpublic affairs participants occurs in selected healthcare delivery organizations. The underlying goal was to understand how knowledge of organizational stakeholders was sought and integrated into information products used to influence public policy. The findings of the study were presented broad to narrow, through a structure, process, and outcome framework.

Findings

Public affairs definitions, structure, and information flow were identified in the literature as problems and gaps. Structurally, public affairs were organized differently across all case sites. Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrated the ways public affairs departments were formulated. The number of public affairs professionals employed in each case site also differed. Intraorganizational information distribution were similar. At the broad level, public affairs distributed information across all departments in the organizations, typically to managers and leaders. The flow of information was both regular and ad-hoc,

and consisted of updates on healthcare public policy matters and current political and policy news articles.

Beyond the identified gaps, there was a paucity of existing research on internal processes of engagement and interaction in responding to public policy proposals. Through knowledge transfer, the overarching finding in this study was intraorganizational interaction was described as an art of practice, accomplished through a blending of ad-hoc and informal, and consistent and formal interaction. Prior to intraorganizational interaction, a critical strategy for public affairs was to employ political acumen and filter voluminous proposed policy information. Commencing intraorganizational engagement mostly originated with public affairs requesting input, but may also begin with nonpublic affairs seeking political guidance. Intraorganizational engagement was primarily ad-hoc and informal, but blended with more formal and consistent interaction.

During the internal engagement process, public affairs assumed the primary role as the conduit of internal knowledge on policy issues. Public affairs used knowledge to filter proposed policy, summarize the proposal, and identify salient points. Public affairs then distributed the proposed policy information, mostly via email, to dedicated internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Recipients of public affairs requests possessed tacit expertise to help determine impact to patient care and healthcare delivery organization. As necessary, dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders may further distribute the information and request for input to other content experts in their department, team, or service line.

The process of developing an information product continued through knowledge transfer. Information received by nonpublic affairs stakeholders initiated action. Intraorganizational stakeholders may further interact with their department and team members to respond to public affairs. Knowledge, in relation to proposed policy, was often shared to public affairs as brief extracts. If the proposed policy was deemed a significant impact to the organization, greater formality and interaction occurred, such as scheduling meetings and creating committees to facilitate knowledge and feedback.

As the conduit, public affairs employees collated the knowledge received from stakeholders on the policy issue. Public affairs members then act on the information by integrating feedback into information products. As an affirmation strategy, stakeholders providing input on proposed policy often review information products prior to approval and external delivery. However, decision-making processes across case sites primarily differed, but most information products were approved by a nonpublic affairs senior leader. Typically, the senior leader providing approval represented the service line or team most impacted by the proposed policy. As an outcome to public affairs information strategies, knowledge from stakeholders were integrated and embedded into deliverables, such as regulatory comment letters responding to proposed administrative rules.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section provides an interpretation of the research findings in relation to existing literature presented in Chapter 2. This segment will follow the flow of findings in the preceding section of this chapter to confirm, disconfirm, and/or extend existing

literature. In addition, gaps in the literature are addressed, along with an analysis of theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

Defining Public Affairs

Public affairs scholarship continues to provide varying definitions of public affairs. A continuous issue in the literature is the lack of a universally accepted consensus on defining public affairs (Boddewyn, 2012; Dahan, 2005; Davidson, 2014; McGrath et al., 2010). In this study, terminology defining professionals engaging in the sociopolitical environment varied. Baysinger and Woodman (1982), Griffin, Fleisher, Brenner, and Boddewyn (2001), and Schuler and Rehbein (1997) stated that organizational specialties focused on the external environment may be referred to as issues management, government relations, public affairs, government affairs, corporate affairs, or legal affairs.

This study affirms the findings of Baysinger and Woodman (1982), Griffin et al. (2001), and Schuler and Rehbein (1997) as case sites differed in their public affairs terminology (government relations and government affairs), but functionally identical. In fact, one case site differentiated public affairs from government affairs. In this organization, public affairs interacted and connected primarily with general public, community groups, and media. This appears to orient toward public relations, aligning with Baysinger and Woodman and Davidson (2014) who argued some functions may overlap with other professions, such as public relations.

Public Affairs Structure

Exploring the structure of public affairs in healthcare delivery organizations produced varying models. Schuler (1999) suggested organizational factors, such as structure and process are critical to understanding corporate political action. Post et al. (1983), Griffin and Dunn (2004) argued there is not a widely accepted manner to structure a public affairs function. Schuler (1996) indicated the structure of public affairs in organizations and firms are likely to be diverse and uneven. Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988) suggested there is an alignment between internal public affairs structure and perceived external responsiveness. In this study, Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrated how public affairs (known as government affairs and government relations) were organizationally structured at each case site. Two case sites were hierarchically organized, reporting up to an executive level officer. One case site structured public affairs with a seamless link to the CEO. Public affairs participants at each case site responded positively on how their department was organized and structured.

Findings from this study supports the argument that there is not a universal way to structure public affairs. Furthermore, this investigation extends existing literature by studying the healthcare delivery sector. Additionally, due to positive responses from public affairs participants on structure of the organizational function with effectiveness, findings by Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988) arguing the internal structure and perceived external responsiveness are supported. However, hierarchical structure patterns demonstrated in two of the three case sites suggest one of the organizations analyzed may be an outlier. Having direct access to the CEO may be advantageous for decision-making

efficiency, but the other organizations studied provided more hierarchical structure. Functionally, two of the three organizations designated a senior leader (vice president) to oversee public affairs. Above the public affairs leader, a chief-level executive provided additional level of oversight, and in an administrative capacity (chief administrative officer). Findings suggest public affairs are organized and structured within an administrative function of the organization, aligning with Boddewyn's (2012) position that public affairs interacts with nonmarket organizational issues. A commonality of two healthcare delivery organizations was organizing public affairs under a chief administrative officer and vice president. However, manager and associate level public affairs staff responsibilities, structure and functions varied.

Public Affairs Information Flow

Research questions also explored the types and general flow of public affairs information within organizations. Boddewyn (2012) argued research is needed on further understanding the flow of public affairs information. Across all case sites, public affairs information was distributed. At the broad level, public affairs disbursed information internally, across all departments in the organizations. Recipients of information were employees serving in a management, leadership, or executive capacity. The timing of distributing information was both consistent and ad-hoc. At two organizations, consistent information flow entailed a daily or weekly email of relevant public policy and political news articles. The purpose of the consistent email was to keep nonpublic affairs stakeholders and leaders apprised of current issues. The other form of information flow

involved updates on applicable public policy issues important to the organization, and were distributed as-needed, or part of a consistent communication piece.

To address Boddewyn's (2012) gap, this study provides some description of public affairs information flow within healthcare delivery organizations. Whether delivered consistently or as-needed, organizational public affairs information flow are products are primarily delivered via email. Other less forms of communication were phone and in-person interaction, such as sharing information through informal meetings or more formally at executive level and board meetings. Two of the three case sites use a regularly scheduled internal email communication to mass recipients, usually at the management and leadership level, while one site only provides updates to a broad audience only during periods of legislative activity. Subject matter entailed current news articles on politics, healthcare policy, and updates on specific public policy issues.

Intraorganizational engagement and interaction

The purpose of this study was to understand and explain intraorganizational engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs. Despite arguments suggesting organizations should manage and coordinate internal resources for public affairs activities, there is a paucity of research on intraorganizational processes of public affairs and corporate political activities (Baron, 1995; Baron, 1999; Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Griffin & Dunn, 2004; Hillman, Keim, & Schuler, 2004; Schuler, 1999; Schuler & Rehbein, 1997; Skippari, 2005; Sonnenfeld, 1984; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). Existing literature did not address the depth sought in this study and findings from the primary research question helped provide evidence to address these gaps.

Through bidirectional learning, public affairs internal engagement and interaction is an art, primarily ad-hoc, and informal. In responding to public policy issues, interaction usually starts with public affairs, but may originate with nonpublic affairs stakeholders. However, ad-hoc engagement can be formal interaction, especially interacting with intraorganizational committees and decision-makers. In contrast, formal, consistent interaction occurred through scheduled meetings and established committees of intraorganizational stakeholders. Nonetheless, consistent interaction does not always require formality. In sharing knowledge, public affairs also interacted with internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders in a regular, informal manner, especially those often requested to provide expertise on public policy issues. Therefore, evidence suggests the art of intraorganizational engagement and facilitation of embedded information through knowledge transfer is an overlap and blend of ad-hoc and informal, and consistent and formal interaction. Depicted in Figure 5, this answered an important case study research question on how knowledge sharing is occurring intraorganizationally between public affairs and nonpublic affairs.

Filtering proposed policy was identified as a practical skill and step for public affairs. Schuler and Rehbein (1997) offered a model of firm-level filtering in relation to corporate political activities. Schuler and Rehbein's (1997) filter focused on the willingness and ability for organizational to become politically involved. In this study, filtering was applied as a functional-oriented step for assessing policy relevance and political dynamics prior to seeking intraorganizational feedback to assess the impact of proposed policy. Filtering was performed as directly applying public affairs knowledge as

part of the intraorganizational knowledge transfer process to help manage the flow of information and requests for input. Data pointed to filtering strategy explaining how public affairs arrived at deciding to distribute an internal request. Carrying out public affairs filtering strategies included an assessment of internal and external factors (Figure 6).

To collate intraorganizational knowledge, public affairs assumed the centralized role of managing policy issues. This finding affirms Sonnenfeld (1984), who argued public affairs should be the designated function for preparing organizational responses to proposed policy. Recipients of requests for input on policy issues were dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders, servicing in an administrative capacity at the management level of the organizations. This finding also aligned with Sonnenfeld (1984), who also advocated for public affairs to work with internally coordinated subject-matter experts. The primary form of communication facilitating interaction was email, along with phone calls and meetings. On policy proposals, transferring information via email included a summarization of the policy proposal, identification of salient points, and the full text of the bill or regulation.

Nonpublic affairs stakeholders typically provided feedback on public policy proposals as brief extracts. Snippets, summaries, and brevity were often communicated via email back to public affairs on the proposed policy. However, if the proposed policy had a perceived significant impact to the organization, greater formality may occur. At times, committees or groups were necessary to effectively transfer knowledge to public affairs on issues with great complexity and impact. Finally, when public affairs

developed a draft information product, it was typically re-circulated for review to those nonpublic affairs stakeholders providing input.

The primary research question generated a new process-based explanation on public affairs internal engagement and interaction. In relation to existing literature, Sonnenfeld (1984) published arguably the most relevant study on firm-level internal nuances of public affairs related to the information strategy. In conducting case study research, Sonnenfeld (1984) argued the absolute importance of public affairs in preparing organizations internally to respond to issues externally is (a) through the use of designated public affairs professionals, (b) internally coordinated experts, and (c) internal influence of public affairs. Findings from this study strongly confirm the use of public affairs professionals as the conduit for information strategies, and internally coordinated content experts to provide feedback and knowledge.

Public Affairs Decision-making

Another gap in the literature is the lack of understanding public affairs decision-making processes (Boddewyn, 2012; Shaffer, 1995; Shaffer & Hillman, 2000). In relation to approving public affairs information products, the decision-making process aligned similarly to how the function was structured within organizations. Despite replication logic, as with public affairs structure, results across all sites for decision-making were quite limited, aligning with Schuler (1996). Findings from this study suggest an alignment between structure and decision-making, which varied across the case settings.

In decision-making, the primary pattern was the near exclusive use of nonpublic affairs stakeholders as the final information product approver (Table 8). More

specifically, another theme was for public affairs to seek information product approval from a nonpublic affairs senior level leader of the division most impacted by the proposed policy. This process appeared to suggest decision-making is issue dependent. At a tactical level, public affairs usually allowed nonpublic affairs stakeholders providing input on the information product to review prior to final approval and delivery.

Overall, the decision-making process of employing nonpublic affairs stakeholders and leaders indicates public affairs uses a legitimacy strategy to ensure an internal check and balance with nonpublic affairs personnel. This strategy also affirms intraorganizational knowledge was accurately transferred and embedded into the external information product. The use of nonpublic affairs stakeholders to provide final approval of information products provides evidence to suggest consistent practice.

Intraorganizational barriers

Institutional barriers inhibit the coordination and management process of developing public affairs information strategies. Process challenges may be negatively impacted by organizational conflict, complexity, and a tangential perspective of the public affairs function (Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Bouwen, 2002; Shaffer, 1995; Shaffer & Hillman, 2000). This study affirmed, extended, and expanded identified barriers to public affairs intraorganizational engagement and interaction.

Rather than only sample public affairs professionals, this study sought the perspectives of nonpublic affairs stakeholders. This design strategy enabled comparison on perceived barriers from both perspectives. Although some issues overlapped, barriers to effective internal collaboration largely differed from the perspectives of public affairs

and nonpublic affairs participants (Figure 7). From the outlook of nonpublic affairs stakeholders, cross-case themes relating to barriers to effective collaboration related to organizational dynamics, including time, conflict of opinion, follow-up, prioritization. Other challenges related with public policy information itself, including volume, complexity, ambiguity. Public affairs participants also perceived issues with conflict of opinion/knowledge and prioritization. In addition, public affairs described responsiveness, finding the right knowledge stakeholder, organizational perspective, and understanding how public affairs actually functions as other challenges.

Identified barriers from this study affirms the similar challenges identified by Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988), Bouwen (2002), Shaffer (1995), and Shaffer and Hillman (2000). Conflict (differing opinions, organizational perspective), complexity (finding the right stakeholder), and a peripheral view of public affairs (lack of understanding public affairs functions) were aligned. Fleisher (2002) added that nonpublic affairs stakeholders do not know how to react to public affairs information, suggesting a lack of understanding of the role in the organization. Other challenges and barriers (time, ambiguity, prioritization, responsiveness and follow-up) add to the body of public affairs literature, taking into consideration nonpublic affairs perspectives.

Utilizing nonpublic affairs knowledge

A commonly executed organizational strategy of political influence is providing information to policymakers (Aplin & Hegarty; 1980; Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bigelow et al., 1997; Bhambri & Sonnenfeld, 1988; Birnbaum, 1985; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 1997; Getz, 2002; Lord, 2000; Rehbein & Lenway,

1994; Schuler et al., 2002; Sonnenfeld, 1984; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). Public affairs information strategies are implemented through various forms including letters, expert testimony, reports, data analytics, and research (Baron, 1999; Barron, 2013; Bigelow, Arndt, & Stone, 1997; Bouwen, 2002; Dahan, 2005; Fleisher, 2000; Getz, 2002; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lord, 2000; Schuler et al., 2002; Taminiau & Wilts, 2006). In developing information products, public affairs rely on internal resources for content knowledge and expertise (Dahan, 2005). Getz (2002) argued institutional theory in the context of public affairs strategies explain how available intraorganizational resources are used. Sonnenfeld (1984) further argued the effectiveness of public affairs information strategy is determined by coordinating subject-matter experts.

Supporting the literature, information strategies were used in the case sites sampled. Information products analyzed as archival records consistent mostly of letters providing input on proposed federal regulations, but also included meeting talking points, and interview statements. The specific subject matter of information outputs widely varied, including medical coding procedures, prescription drug pricing, electronic health records standards, quality measures, and patient discharge procedures. Aligning with institutional theory (Getz, 2002) findings from the study support the argument that resources are available through nonpublic affairs stakeholders to share expertise provide feedback on public policy issues (Dahan, 2005). Affirming and extending Sonnenfeld (1984), public affairs lead the drafting of information pieces, requested input from nonpublic affairs stakeholders, and cohesively integrated knowledge into various information products. This study found public affairs relying on institutional resources

via the knowledge of internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders to assist the crafting of external information products.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Findings from the study support and extend knowledge transfer theory to public affairs practice in healthcare delivery organizations. The conceptual framework complemented knowledge transfer theory by reflecting the primary gaps identified in the public affairs literature. The conceptual framework in Chapter 2 was presented ambiguously as a black box—the lack of existing research attributed to openly crafting the conceptual framework. Due to the lack of research, elements of grounded theory were integrated into the case study research design, data collection, and analysis. Strategies and tactics recommended for public affairs practice to facilitate the process model is described later in this chapter. To culminate findings and integrate the theoretical and conceptual framework, a public affairs intraorganizational knowledge transfer theory (Figure 9) and knowledge transfer process-based model (Figure 10) explain intraorganizational interaction and engagement in responding to proposed policy.

Scholars argue knowledge transfer is considered crucial to business and organizational success, but often challenging to facilitate (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013; Sroka et al., 2014; Tang, 2011; Wambui et al., 2013). Figure 9 explains how knowledge transfer occurs through the perspective of public affairs: ad-hoc or consistent interaction through a blend of informal and formal methods. Using a holistic perspective of knowledge transfer theory, Thompson et al. (2009) distinguished the roles of sender and receiver as information or knowledge, depicted in Figure 10. The sender is explicitly lending their

knowledge to the receiver. The receiver interprets the knowledge as information, unless accepted and used. As Thompson et al. (2009) argued, knowledge must be accessible, understandable, relevant, desired, usable, and repeatable to be transferred effectively. Without meeting these conditions, knowledge transfer cannot occur.

Within healthcare delivery organizations, knowledge and information is constantly shared. As an externalized trigger, through resource dependency theory (Boddewyn, 2012; Getz, 2002), proposed public policy prompts the need for public affairs to filter, analyze, and respond with information and knowledge. In reacting to public policy proposals, a filtering process is used. Public affairs knowledge is transferred (sender) as information to nonpublic affairs stakeholders (receivers). Throughout this process, engagement, interaction and bidirectional learning occurs. When nonpublic affairs stakeholders accept and analyze the information, action occurs to create new knowledge. Nonpublic affairs knowledge is transferred (sender) back to public affairs (receivers) as information. Public affairs uses the newly acquired information, integrating into information products. The information product is reviewed, approved, and externally delivered to policymakers.

The key tenets of holistic knowledge transfer theory are understanding perspectives of senders and receivers, and the socialized process engagement and action. As Thompson et al. (2009) argue, to transfer knowledge effectively, knowledge must be accessible, understandable, relevant, desired, useable, and repeatable. Findings from this study support Thompson et al. (2009) and knowledge transfer theory. First, public affairs use dedicated stakeholders as access points of knowledge. Without stakeholders to

interact with to share and generate knowledge, public affairs may not be able to effectively execute information strategies. Second, providing knowledge that is understandable is fundamentally important to facilitation. Public affairs often attempts to pare down public policy information into summaries, focusing on salient points before transferring to nonpublic affairs stakeholders. In turn, nonpublic affairs stakeholders provide brief extracts or summaries.

Knowledge has to be relevant to the public policy issue. Using filtering strategies, public affairs knowledge should help identify relevant public policy issues impacting the organization, and opportunities to provide meaningful input. Fourth, intraorganizational stakeholder knowledge is desired. Public affairs leveraged intraorganizational stakeholders to help determine the impact of proposed public policy and develop information products. Next, knowledge was found to be useable. Policymaking relies on stakeholder information and knowledge, and without receiving feedback from intraorganizational stakeholders, information products would be impacted. Finally, knowledge needs to be repeatable. Stakeholders must be willing and able to continuously provide input on public policy issues as they arise. Public affairs should foster internal relationships, learn and absorb new knowledge, and apply to future public policy issues and information strategies.

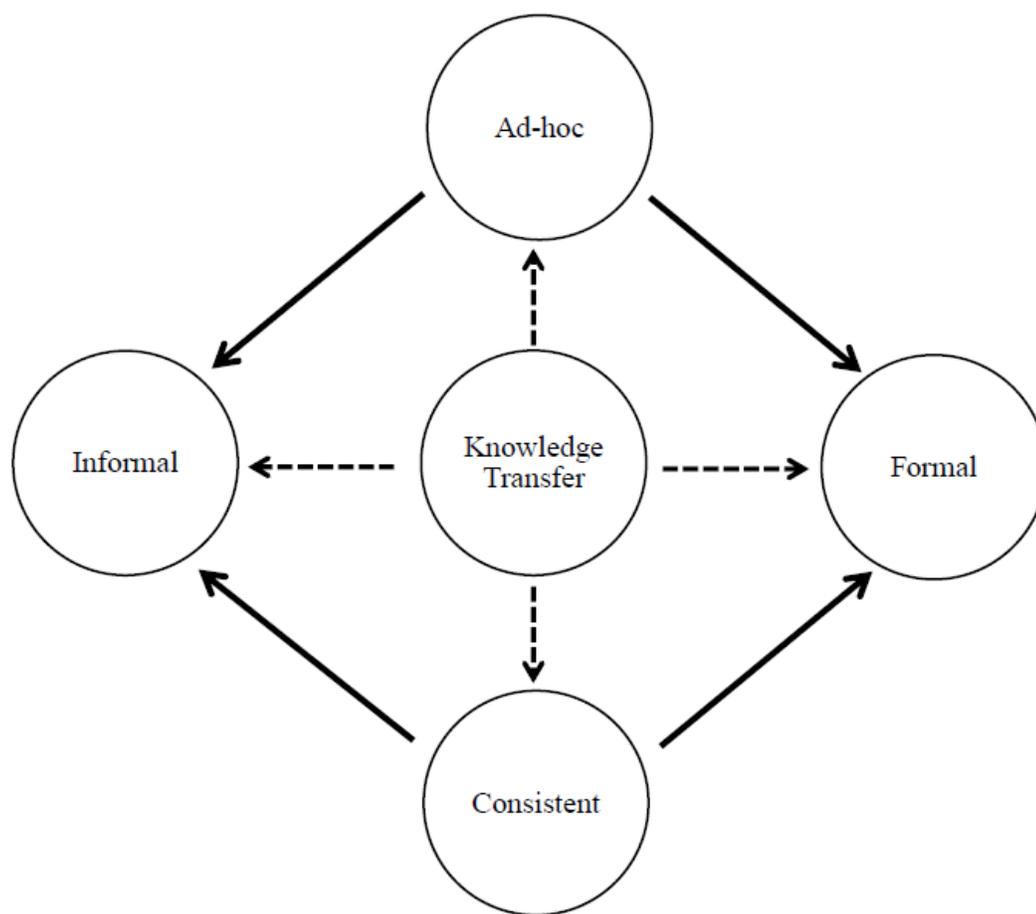


Figure 9. Public Affairs Intraorganizational Knowledge Transfer Theory.

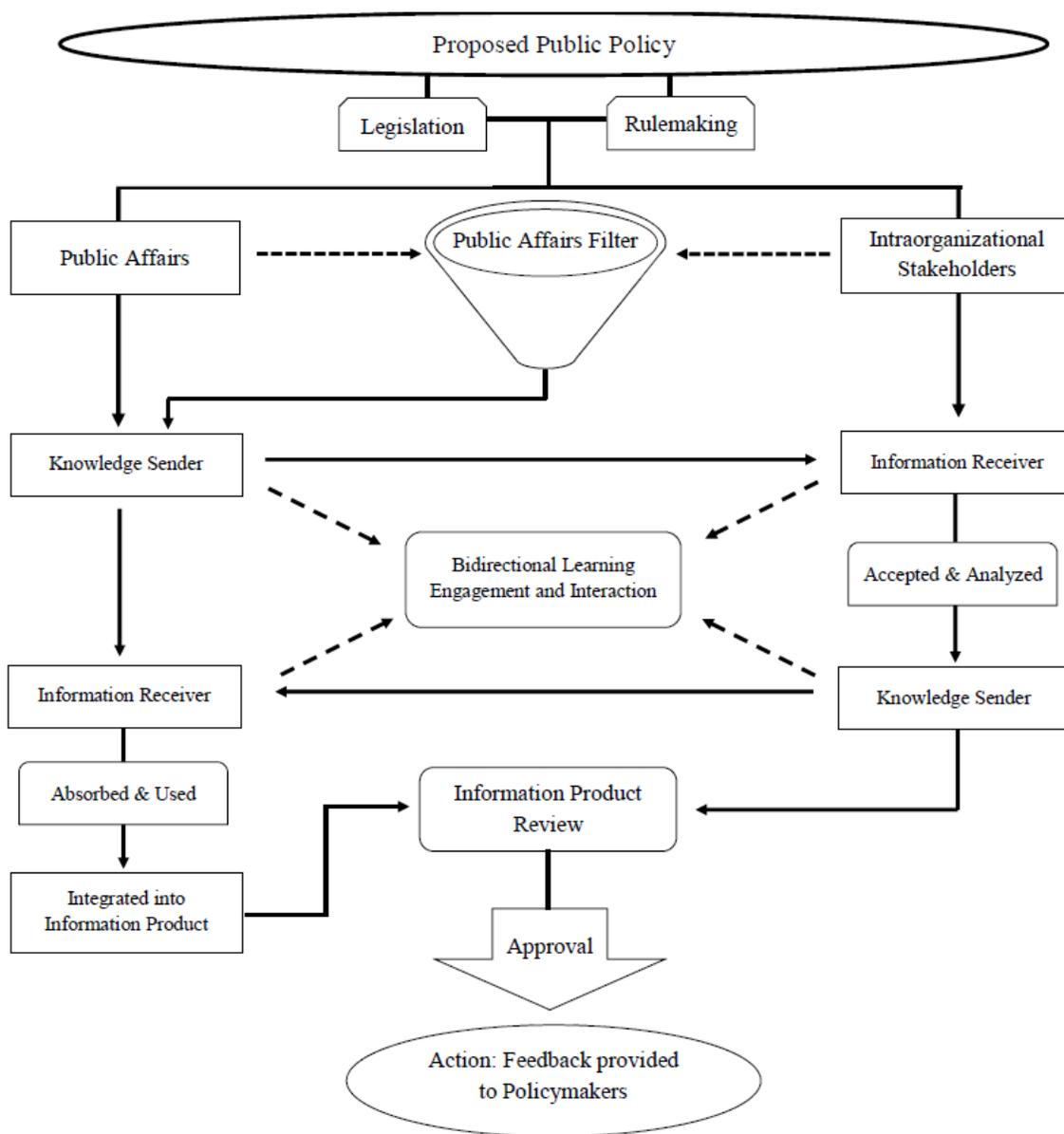


Figure 10. Public Affairs Intraorganizational Knowledge Transfer Process Model.

Limitations and Recommendations

This multiple case study unveiled intraorganizational aspects of public affairs practice in healthcare delivery organizations. There are limitations in researching through a qualitative paradigm and case study methodology. This section acknowledges the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for further inquiry.

There are several elements in this study providing opportunities for further research. A design delimitation was a small sample of healthcare delivery organizations in a specific region of the country. Through replication logic to help build a greater data set, studying additional healthcare delivery organizations would provide stronger evidence to extend, confirm, or refute findings. Furthermore, replicating this study beyond healthcare delivery organizations would determine the extent to which findings are supported in public affairs scholarship in other economic and business sectors.

Another broad-level limitation of the research design is generalization. As a qualitative study, statistical generalization was not possible, and a known weakness of the employed case study design. For example, using the findings toward developing a survey to reach and obtain a large sample of participants would provide evidence to help generalize findings. Testing intraorganizational knowledge transfer theory in the context of public affairs with a wider sample would build a greater level of understanding. As presented in Figure 5 and Figure 9, the art of public affairs intraorganizational engagement and interaction was presented as a broad explanation of public affairs knowledge transfer theory. Testing the theory with larger samples in other settings would be beneficial.

The strength of this study was replication logic and answering intraorganizational research questions. The primary question and subquestions provide researchers opportunities for further inquiry. As a delimitation, this study focused on responses to proposed public policy, and not early policy development. This delimitation was asked by some research participants as a future consideration. However, there may be different processes for public affairs and stakeholders to generate public policy ideas before they become a formal proposal. This is an area where additional research would be advantageous.

Defining quality information products would also be enhanced from further study. Bouwen (2002) calls this public affairs “access goods” (p. 369). An extension of providing information to policymakers is developing quality information products (Bouwen, 2002; Fleisher, 2000; Taminiou & Wilts, 2006). A future assessment of what is deemed quality public affairs information products to influence public policy could further extend this study and be researched further. An assessment of quality was not part of the study, but emerged from the literature review as an element of policymaker access. Furthermore, to gain even better insight into intraorganizational knowledge transfer, a study could identify specific extracts of knowledge obtained intraorganizationally by carefully reviewing information products. In this hypothetical study, the integration of knowledge was inferred, and not specifically annotated in the public records and documents obtained.

Lingering research questions and problems remain in public affairs. This study attempted to address a gap in the recent public affairs literature on information flow and

decision-making processes—both areas that can benefit from additional research. As depicted in the data, public affairs still suffers from role ambiguity as an internal barrier. Further understanding public affairs decision-making processes would benefit from additional research with more healthcare delivery organizations and others outside of the healthcare sector. There continues to lack a universal definition, terminology, and theory of public affairs. This study presented depth and unveiled an area of research not garnering much attention in public affairs scholarship. There is much to be learned further from a young field of scholarship.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The U.S. healthcare delivery system continues to be plagued with substantially high per capita costs and disparate levels of quality. As policymakers attempt changes to improve healthcare delivery, professionals providing healthcare services should be included in the policymaking process. Public affairs is strategically positioned to facilitate knowledge and link public policy with the delivery of healthcare services. Improving the healthcare delivery system through public policymaking is fostered through aligning policy with healthcare professional practice and improving patient care.

Positive social change is driven by improved policymaking, public administration, and healthcare delivery. From this study, a better understanding of knowledge transfer benefits policymaking, public affairs practice and healthcare delivery organizations. Knowledge transfer can become a catalyst for linking improved healthcare delivery at the organizational level, to public policy at the societal level. Toward the journey of

improving healthcare delivery and lowering costs, public affairs and healthcare delivery professionals need to work in tandem to accomplish goals of a better healthcare system. In implementing healthcare programs, public administrators need quality information and knowledge to effectively administer social and healthcare programs. Public administrators should recognize the important role organizational public affairs professionals have in linking knowledge sought to legitimize public policy. Public affairs can serve as the public policy conduit to better improve healthcare programs, create new delivery models, and help improve patient outcomes to advance positive social change.

Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications

The core purpose of the study focused on the perspective of public affairs. From a methodological perspective, it was imperative to include nonpublic affairs stakeholders as a means of data triangulation. Findings indicated there was overlap in responses, but gaining the insight of both roles proved to be instrumental in understanding engagement and interaction. As public affairs serves in a boundary spanning capacity and dependent on intraorganizational knowledge to carry out information strategies, further studies in public affairs, either quantitative or qualitative should strongly consider the nonpublic affairs perspective to build and broaden the context of research findings.

Empirically, the model presented from this study should serve future scholarship as a beginning point. As Sonnenfeld (1984) described the coordination of internal stakeholders as a “chaotic map of assigning public affairs responsibilities” (p. 69), this provided an attempt to describe and explain how the process of interaction occurs

intraorganizationally. If used as a framework in future research, I fully expect the model to be tested, modified, and improved.

At the time of this study, no other known studies generated from the review of literature applied knowledge transfer theory to public affairs scholarship. Information strategies are widely used in public affairs practice. This study dives into how information products are developed, and findings indicate intraorganizational knowledge transfer is essential for public affairs practice. Public affairs scholarship should embrace knowledge transfer theory as it applies to providing information to policymakers.

An area this study did not address was the philosophical difference between knowledge and information. However, public affairs information strategies are the product of knowledge sharing. Nonetheless, I would urge further researchers to differentiate information and knowledge by the use of action. Information becomes knowledge when used for action. If public affairs provides information to lawmakers and the information is used for developing or modifying public policy, should it not be considered knowledge? Based on this study, I challenge public affairs scholarship to revisit information strategy research with a focus on how knowledge is integrated. I further challenge public affairs scholarship and practice to move away from terming information strategies, and toward knowledge-based strategies. I believe this would accurately depict the intraorganizational interaction and engagement performed to generate public policy responses.

Implications for Practice

Conducting this study provides benefit for public affairs practitioners. The underlying goal of the inquiry was to understand how knowledge is transferred from organizational stakeholders to the level of public policy and administration with public affairs as the conduit and facilitator. Obtaining data from nonpublic affairs participants was instrumental in receiving ideas and tactics for best practice. Memos 6 and 7 of Appendix G provided perspectives on best practices for intraorganizational engagement.

Public affairs practitioners should be keenly aware of internal stakeholders and their knowledge. Developing and maintaining a working list of content knowledge stakeholders would be practically helpful to know where to direct policy issues and questions. With stakeholders frequently consulted on policy issues, a recommendation for public affairs practitioners is to schedule periodic meetings or check-ins. This helps with relationship management and ensures open communication.

Presented in Figure 6, filtering public policy proposals was identified as a public affairs strategy. For the practitioner responsible for monitoring the sociopolitical environment, filtering legislation and rules helps manage the flow of information. As an identified barrier, nonpublic affairs stakeholders receive an abundance of emails. Adding to the email burden with unnecessary public policy information lessens the value of the role. Filtering public policy should include an assessment of internal (relevance, priority, potential impact if known) and external factors (probability of advancement, political implications and realities, association activity).

For public affairs practice, communicating public policy information should not only be a forwarded, piecemealed email on a proposed bill. Public affairs practitioners should be cognizant of the time stakeholders need to review and respond to proposed policy, often outside of their typical organizational role responsibilities. The communication should be distilled and packaged that is easier for nonpublic affairs stakeholders to comprehend and respond. The communication request for input should focus on brevity and at the very least, provide an overall summary, identify salient points, and include the full text of the proposal. Guiding questions, relevant news articles (links), next steps, and deadlines should also be considered to include.

Participants identified nuances of practice improvement. Nonpublic affairs respondents identified areas for public affairs to improve. One, public affairs need to keep relevant stakeholders apprised of progress on a proposed bill, or communicate the final outcome of a proposed rule once finalized and released. This emerged as a recommendation from stakeholders that provided expertise on a proposal, and desire to learn about the final outcome. In contrast, public affairs would like stakeholders to provide feedback in a timely manner, focus on communicating facts versus opinions, and be willing to learn the dynamics of policymaking. For example, using the filtering process, public affairs should adopt a practice and clearly communicate to stakeholders that requests for their expertise on issues are on meaningful and plausible policy proposals. Implications for practice should help practitioners identify consistent barriers and improve their existing intraorganizational processes for information strategies.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to address a problem and gap in public affairs practice. Defining public affairs, structure and flow of internal information were identified in the literature as problems and gaps. Issues in public affairs practice were expanded with an identified scarcity of scholarship centered intraorganizationally. A holistic perspective of knowledge transfer theory and process-based concept model provided the study's framework.

Defining public affairs continues to vary. Different terms were used, including government affairs and government relations supporting the various ways to designate the nonmarket function (Baysinger & Woodman, 1982; Griffin et al., 2001; Schuler & Rehbein, 1997). Structuring public affairs also differed across the organizations. The lack of identifying a consistent or best method to structure public affairs supports Post et al. (1983) and Schuler (1996). Addressing the information flow gap identified by Boddewyn (2012), information diffusion internally was both ad-hoc and regular, and consisted primarily of updates on important public policy issues, and general political news and updates. Another gap noted by Boddewyn (2012), Shaffer (1995), and Shaffer and Hillman (2000), a consistent decision-making aspect of organizations studied was nonpublic affairs stakeholders almost invariably approving public affairs information products.

The absence of rich research on internal aspects of information products provided a basis for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The proposed theory and process models attempt to explain how intraorganizational interaction occurs in healthcare

delivery organizations. Through bidirectional learning, knowledge is continuously transferred between public affairs and nonpublic affairs, assuming both roles as senders and receivers. Barriers to effective knowledge transfer within the context of public affairs information strategies were identified and add to existing literature. The end result is an information product in response to proposed policy, reviewed and approved by nonpublic affairs stakeholders, that integrates their knowledge and expertise.

The outcome of this study serves as a beginning point to understanding how public affairs functions internally when developing information strategies. The challenge was crafting a process model when interaction may be continuous, or completely asymmetrical. Testing the theory of public affairs intraorganizational knowledge transfer will help build this study further. Nevertheless, more needs to be done, and the opportunities for additional research focused intraorganizationally are abundant.

The U.S. healthcare delivery system faces overwhelming challenges. As a societal problem, this study underscores the fundamental need for public affairs to be the conduit for transferring the knowledge of healthcare professionals to the level of public policymaking. To address healthcare disparities, drive positive social change, and improve our nation's healthcare delivery system depends on leveraging expertise of healthcare professionals.

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Appendix A: Participant Invitation

Dear _____:

I hope this note finds you well. I am sending you this email as an invitation to participate in my dissertation research, titled *“Integrating public affairs information strategy with organizational practices in healthcare delivery organizations.”*

This study asks “How do public affairs professionals engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies?” In conducting this study, I am seeking to understand the following:

- **Structures and processes of public affairs information strategies**, exploring how healthcare delivery organizations structure their public affairs function. Also, the study investigates the process of developing information strategies, which are considered “products” such as public comment letters responding to proposed rules and/or legislation.
- **Intraorganizational interaction and engagement with nonpublic affairs professionals**. In other words, how do public affairs work with nonpublic affairs (clinicians, physicians, quality professionals, etc.) when responding to proposed policy?
- **How to leverage embedded organizational knowledge into information strategies**. How is the knowledge and expertise of nonpublic affairs stakeholders used in responding to proposed policy?

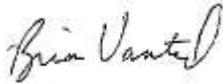
I am seeking potential participants that are part of the organization’s public/government affairs team, or work with the public/government affairs team on

public policy issues. As a participant, I would like to interview you at a time convenient for you. In addition, I will ask for any de-identified documentation (emails, memos, notes) that you are comfortable with providing that illustrates interaction on public policy issues.

If you are interested and able to participate, please let me know at your earliest convenience. We will then schedule a time and location that works for you and I will email you a participant consent form.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Vamstad".

Brian Vamstad
PhD Candidate
Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Public Affairs Participants

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Topics and Questions:

1. How is public affairs structured in the organization?
 - a. Organizational hierarchy description
 - b. Oversight and governance
 - c. Decision-making process
2. What is the process of distributing public affairs information?
 - a. How is information distributed?
 - b. Where is the information distributed?
 - c. What is professional level of nonpublic affairs that receive information?
3. How do nonpublic affairs professionals contribute to information strategies?
 - a. Process description
 - b. Extent of nonpublic affairs knowledge and usefulness
 - c. Reviewer/decision-maker role
4. What are barriers to interaction with nonpublic affairs professionals on public policy matters?
 - a. Structural-oriented

- b. Process-related
 - c. Cultural/organizational
 - d. Knowledge or information factors
5. What would be an ideal process for responding to policy proposals with organizational knowledge?
- a. How would barriers be alleviated?
 - b. How would organizational knowledge be maximized?
6. Who would be a good nonpublic affairs individual for me to interview that you interact with on public policy issues?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add before we close the interview?

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Nonpublic Affairs Participants

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Professional Level (associate, management, executive, etc.):

Brief position description/responsibilities:

Topics and Questions:

1. Describe your role within the organization.
 - a. Responsibilities
 - b. Oversight/hierarchy
2. How does your role interact with the organization's public affairs function?
 - a. Extent of interaction (ad-hoc, consistent, etc.)
 - b. Type of interaction (email, phone, meetings, committees)
3. What kinds of information do you receive from public affairs?
 - a. Extent of information usefulness
4. How do you respond to requests for feedback/input on public policy matters?
 - a. Communication/distribution platform
 - b. Process of action
 - c. Challenges to responding to requests
5. What are challenges to responding to public policy proposals

- a. Process barriers
 - b. Information and knowledge barriers
 - c. Organizational barriers
 - d. Personnel barriers
6. Is there an additional person(s) you would recommend I contact within your organization that engages public affairs on public policy issues?
 7. Is there anything else you would like to add before we close the interview?

Appendix D: Public Affairs Records Review Protocol

Public Affairs Records Review Protocol**Document Details**

Date:

Time:

Place:

Document Provided by/extracted from:

Brief Document Description:

Research Question Alignment

Check each box according to the research question(s) which the document applies:

- How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?**
- How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?**
- What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?**
- How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?**

- How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?**

Document Storage

Check box if provided as a hard copy, document has been electronically scanned and hard copy stored in a locked metal storage cabinet.

Appendix E: Organizational Document Review Protocol

Organizational Document Review Protocol**Document Details**

Date:

Time:

Place:

Document Provided by:

Brief Document Description:

Research Question Alignment

Check each box according to the research question(s) which the document applies:

- How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?**
- How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?**
- What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?**
- How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?**

- How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?**

Document Storage

Check box if provided as a hard copy, document has been electronically scanned and hard copy stored in a locked metal storage cabinet.

Appendix F: Journal Entries

Journal Entry #1**January 27, 2016****8:47pm****Case Study Site Visit****Day 1, Organization A**

Today was my first day conducting qualitative research. All 5 of my interviews went on the as scheduled with each lasting 30-45 minutes. The exception was the final interview, which was with a colleague in public affairs that lasted nearly 90 minutes. I took notes during each interview which helped me in presenting probing questions.

The first day test running my semi-structured interview questions went fairly well. What I will be discovering upon generating transcripts is a little back-and-forth amongst responses in aligning with research questions. Although in a perfect world, responses would have been linear to the questions asked, but I can understand this is an unrealistic expectation. Coding should help with this.

At times it seemed as though interviewees were hesitant on responding truthfully to barriers and challenges questions. Although this cannot be confirmed, it felt like there was an overwhelming amount of praise rather than open, honesty regarding challenges that exist to responding to public policy proposals. I would be very surprised if organizations noted that there are no issues with the process or organizational structures

related to government affairs. I wonder if some responses were discussed that “protected” co-workers rather than being honest.

I received a good amount of documentation. I really wasn't sure what I would receive due to the internal, and potentially confidential nature of the documents. Nonetheless, this is very helpful to illustrate the dynamics of intraorganizational engagement and interaction. I anticipate this form of data to supplement interview responses very well.

In terms of executing the interviews, I really tried to be casual but ask probing questions. Although I don't want to put words in the mouths of respondents, at times it helps to continue the conversation down the best path and to also recap what has been said. I really do not want to lead interviewees, but at times it seems to help them gather thoughts and understand clearly where my research is going or what my focus is. If I ask completely open questions without any prompting or probing, I'm afraid the data I would receive would be irrelevant and inadequate.

I also noticed quite a bit of dialogue around the external part of public policy, such as discussing government policy and what comes down from policymakers. However, at times I had to bring the interviews back to only focus on the internal dynamics and interactions as the core focus. There was a bit of interview material that will not be relevant to the research because externalities of public affairs have already been researched quite heavily.

Another thing that came up in one of my interviews was interest on non-government affairs personnel owning certain public policy issues. For example, if something is consistent, should it be owned by a certain individual within the organization to ensure that it is covered. I plan to ask this in future interviews.

After the formal interview concluded, there was a lot of good informal dialogue about my research project. People seemed to be genuinely interested and I could see that there was a vested interest in the outcome to help their organizational practices. This makes me feel good that I'm researching something relevant and practical, and not for the sake of studying something.

Note to others doing case studies: having someone show you around or help organize conference rooms is absolutely essential to carrying out a seamless schedule. I cannot thank the organization enough, and the administrative assistant that helped me. Let's see what tomorrow brings.

Journal Entry #2

January 28, 2016

7:35pm

Case Study Site Visit

Day 2, Organization A

Today was my second day conducting qualitative research with interviews. This was a lighter day (only 2 interviews) which was needed to have some time to digest the information I received thus far. Today I had two very quality interviews that I think built

on what I learned in my first day. The first interview lasted about 50 minutes, the second approximately 40 minutes. I think my research questions balance responses quite well; my IRB application has a maximum time limit (per discretion) of 60 minutes. I've only exceeded it once which was expected by the individual I was interviewing.

The first interview was very productive to the research questions. The individual hit on all the key areas I was seeking, and providing very good insight into what is happening, including discussion on challenges and barriers that I was seeking to understand. I really felt like I had a really good rapport established with the first interviewee. I also received some very excellent documentation that demonstrated the internal interaction.

The second interview today started off a bit shallow. The interviewee came in with an expectation that her responses would be less applicable or important than others. However, after we got into the discussion, we really focused on some key points and was able to have a very good interview; much better than either myself or her expected. I was really pleased with her insight and actually discovered a couple of interesting phenomenon. I was also able to ask her about ownership that came up in an interview the first day and it was woven in the conversation really nicely. I actually got this question from a respondent during the first day which was really appreciated and may potentially provide a theme that was completely unexpected.

After the interviews today I realized my notetaking needs work. Maybe I need more space/lines or use a notebook instead of the space on my interview guide. I'm not sure yet, but I need to do something different for my next case study visit next week.

Tomorrow I have four interviews before concluding my visit. I was able to go out skiing today which was very nice to clear my mind and focus better before my final day. I also have a second public affairs professional tomorrow; I'm hoping I receive better input than my first public affairs interview; that one was very scattered but I think it was primarily the product of the interviewee's personality and demeanor.

Journal Entry #3

January 29, 2016

9:43pm

Case Study Site Visit

Day 3, Organization A

Today was my final day conducting qualitative research with interviews at the first case study site. This morning I conducted one small group interview and two individual interviews.

This first small group interview was not really preferred, but was at the request of the participants. They seemed to be a little protective of their responses as if not wanting to openly admit challenges and barriers with others in the room. However, it was nice to see how a small team worked together on policy responses; this aspect was appreciated

on how it was an understanding that key public policy issues required collective expertise and not individual responses.

I need to do better with the second case study site with avoiding too much leading. Although I often feel that participants are not quite sure what I'm looking for, I need to avoid prompting. Today, I had a really good open-ended follow-up question when I simply asked how did this make you feel? Rather than "Did you find this valuable?" This approach needs to carry over into the second case study site.

There was a bit tendency for respondents to move externally rather than focus on internal dynamics. Several times participants talked about policy issues they were working on; while examples are appreciated this is not my focus. Perhaps an intraorganizational focus has been difficult for past researchers, hence the reason very little research has been done on this dynamic.

Like yesterday, today I continued to feel as if there is a lot of "guarding" going on. Employees don't want to "rat" out others, which is understandable. However, honesty is critical to the success or shortcoming of the research.

Concerns regarding "guarding" was dismissed in my second interview today. This interview could have lasted several hours, even as the participant suggested. There was a lot of open dialogue happening and I may follow-up with this individual. His/Her responses were very important and shed quite a bit of light from the perspective of the government affairs professional. Many assumptions/perspectives that I anticipated were unveiled during this interview. This person was very open and honest. The responses

during this interview also shed some more light that there is no formula or best way to structure or execute government affairs; it is learned based on the organization. Some of this has already been noted in the research literature. **I also need to ask about barriers more and what government affairs do if there is not any response from subject-matter experts.** Do they go with best knowledge available? Do they keep “pinging” until a response? Or sit out from the policy discussion?

My final interview was also very good in terms of the feeling of openness and honesty. The person was not shy about pointing out challenges with internal policy responses. The interview was very practitioner oriented and subsequently was very good dialogue. This interview also shed some new light on the level of nonpublic affairs professionals that are consulted for expertise.

Overall, this first case study site visit was very good. This was most definitely learning on the go or “baptism by fire.” I may need to re-order my interview questions a little bit as respondents jumped across and back and forth on my question categories in my semi-structured interview format. I am very glad to have a semi-structured format with opportunity to build on the conversation; a standard questionnaire would have fallen terribly short.

In addition, documentation I received was very good. I really did not know what to expect. I sort of pondered that organizations may not want to share any internal documentation, but my first site visit proved otherwise. I have several pieces of artifacts

that I can use to supplement my interview data. I was pleasantly surprised by this and hope other organizations do the same.

Finally, I was invited to a presentation by government affairs today at the conclusion of my site visit for organizational staff. About 100 people attended where participation counted towards continuing education credit. This was another way to which public policy information and knowledge was transferred to nonpublic affairs professionals within organizations in a more formalized manner.

Journal Entry #4

February 4, 2016

9:06pm

Case Study Site Visit

Day 1, Organization B

Today was my first day conducting qualitative research with interviews at the second case study site. I conducted five interviews, with each lasting between 25-60 minutes. I was very fortunate to have a reserved conference room for the duration of the day. This was greatly appreciated and was very helpful working with a designated administrative assistant.

As in my first case study site visit, I again felt a sense that everyone was trying to make sure they didn't say anything too negative about others. I find it hard to believe that when asked about barriers and challenges nothing ever comes up with significant issues. However, this may certainly be the case.

My best interview of the day came with an individual that also has a PhD. The insight was at the appropriate depth, and I could sense the interviewee understood exactly what I was trying to get at. The participant never alluded to an area that I was not touching on: personnel. Although much of my research is focused on processes and structures, personnel is ultimately critical to execute the strategy. I think in my case study report I need to make mention of this in some way. The structure and processes are only as good as the professionals that can make it happen.

Today I also got the feeling that some people thought I was probing for depth on quite obvious or even shallow questions. Even though I want specifics, I think many in government affairs especially take it granted on what information is shared and how it is communicated. But I also think this is absolutely essential because these questions have not been asked before. For example, I am curious to ask about what is included in information on proposed public policy in an email as it contributes to how information and knowledge are transferred. Others may think this is quite a shallow and basic question, but I think it is essential to obtaining the data I need to fill in my conceptual framework. I still plan to probe specifics. At this point, I have a very general idea of how to depict the conceptual framework, but there is still a lot of un-clarity.

What I was really happy with today was getting insight on the “filtering” process gov’t affairs uses prior to sharing with non-government affairs stakeholders. This was very helpful and there was some consistency.

I continue to be interested in the reciprocation that occurs between stakeholders and government affairs. More specifically, what happens when stakeholders contact government affairs, and how it is handled.

I continue to hear themes regarding the size/scope of the policy issue and the formalized structure of the public policy issue/program. It seems like the greater the issue's impact on the health system, the more committees, meetings, and structure occurs through implementation. Other issues are more ad-hoc.

I hope tomorrow's interviews will continue to shed some more light on perspectives in the conceptual framework.

Journal Entry #5

February 5, 2016

10:29pm

Case Study Site Visit

Day 2, Organization B

Today was my second and final day conducting qualitative research with interviews at the second case study site. I conducted four interviews, with each lasting between 25-60 minutes with one cancellation.

There were a few unexpected issues with today's interviews. The first few went fine, but the last three did not. I had two people that were willing to participate, but refused to be audio recorded. I was a bit taken back by this. The first 20+ interviews of this dissertation went without a hitch (in terms of informed consent), then I had back-to-

back interviewees that did not want to be recorded. So my note taking skills were put to the test. I intend to do member checking procedures the same as I would for transcripts; instead this would be notes.

The final interview also did not go according to plan. About 5 minutes prior to my scheduled time, I received an email from the participant saying they were at home sick. The other participant (two-person interview) was also out of the office, but could chat by phone. Given the circumstances, I decided to call one of the interviewees (from same department) and do an impromptu phone interview (not recorded) while taking notes.

As it turns out, the very best interview I've had to date was with a person that didn't want to be audio recorded. The person was of very similar age and experience as me, and I could tell we were on the same page throughout the interview. This was a huge disappointment, but one that I could not control. What was interesting was that this person e-consented to the interview beforehand but didn't want to be recorded.

My approach to this was to explain the shortfalls of not audio recording; the lack of a transcript to do data analysis with, and the lack of opportunity to fully do a transcript check. However, to maintain integrity and ethics, I honored each of their requests.

I really felt like this organization had their "stuff" together. What I mean is that since they are a large organization, they centralized their administrative offices. I heard more than once how nice it was to be close to each other in the same building. This brought up the informal interaction that takes place in an office environment that has not been the focal point of my research. Nonetheless, I think this is noteworthy.

My attempts to develop a systematic process and understanding of the research have been difficult. The core of this research is very informal, ad-hoc, and fluid. However, I still think I can derive some form of pictorial representation of what is going on. There are some patterns that are happening that are consistent between organization A and organization B worth noting and illustrating. I hope that I can fill in the black box of the conceptual framework with at least some recommendations, and at best a theory, of what is going on.

One thing that is giving me reassurance that I am studying something noteworthy is the post-interview discussion. I wasn't really planning on this occurring, but most participants are eager to ask me questions following my formal line of questions. I like having an informal interview recap which illustrates why certain questions were asked. It gives a sense of reasoning to participants and also feels that they know they are providing value to research. I have enjoyed the post-interview de-brief just as much as the interview itself. People seem to be more relaxed knowing the audio recorder is turned off.

Journal Entry #6

April 17, 2016

10:01pm

Extracting public records

This evening's entry will focus on the procedures for obtaining organizational public affairs public records. More specifically, this will focus on obtaining public

comments to the United States federal register, the clearinghouse entity for submitting comments on proposed regulatory policy.

The overall process of obtaining regulatory comments is quite simple. Comments are readily available and are housed in a single entity. The following are the procedures for locating organizational letters/comments in response to regulations:

- 1) Open web browser and go to <http://www.regulations.gov>
- 2) In the search box at the top, type in the organization in quotations, click search (or hit enter on keyboard)
- 3) The following page will list all the hits. On the box on the left-hand side of the screen, check Public submissions. Uncheck all the others. If they are checked with a check-mark, simply click on the box to uncheck.
- 4) The page should auto-refresh to only display those with the organization. Once displayed, you have the ability to sort by relevance, oldest, newest, etc.
- 5) For this study, I chose newest to oldest. For organization B, 74 public records were found. I selected those to use in 2016 and 2015 only.
- 6) Click on each headline, which will take you to the comment page. There you can click on the file and download (usually a word document or PDF). You can even click on open docket on the right-hand side of the screen to open all the public comments on a particular proposal.
- 7) Download and save the file.

Thus far, it has been fairly easy to extract public records. This has been the simplest form of documentation I'm able to retrieve without any assistance of the organization. There are no restrictions on this documentation because it is public record. However, for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality, I will not name the organization or specific content, but more or less interested in the structure and use of nonpublic affairs organizational knowledge.

At this point, I need to dig a bit more to find legislative public records. These records are specific to the regulatory (administrative) process. If I can locate some public comment letters on legislation or legislative hearings, that would be very helpful to see how they are similar/different.

Journal Entry #7

April 24, 2016

7:51pm

Public Affairs Information Products and Decision-making

Who should make the final decision in public affairs information tactics? Thus far I've experienced two very contrasting methods: (a) CEO signs everything; and (b) Division Director/Chief/VP makes the final decision dependent on the policy issue.

A variable in this equation may be the size of the organization. Organization A is much smaller than Organization B. In this, Organization A has a direct line to the CEO for final decisions while Organization B uses a conglomerate of executives that are primarily responsible for the service line(s) that are most affected by the proposed policy.

This probably assures expertise in the right areas and the executive knows they are responsible to make the final decision following review of a letter, comment, or other external information product.

Both organizations have expressed that the process seems to work well. And it may. Another potential variable is that Organization A the CEO had a background in doing government affairs work, so that person may just be interested in public policy and thus want to exercise some direct decision-making authority on information products.

Nonetheless, the important piece that I would argue based on interviews and document reviews is that decision-making process needs to be clear. When a proposed rule or bill is released, it should be clear at the forefront of who is most responsible for deciding the final message product. In organization A, this is the same each time. In organization B, this changes, and following the review of public records, this is even more apparent. In the interviews, this was alluded to by experience of the government affairs VP in knowing who to reach out to for feedback and decisions. This was supported by organization B, PA2 interview that noted the past external affairs medical director was instrumental in “showing the ropes.” Experience gained and passed along to the next might be critical for new public affairs professionals to gain intraorganizational institutional processes and knowledge.

Journal Entry #8

April 27, 2016

7:47am

Extracting public records #2

This morning's entry will focus on the procedures for obtaining organizational public affairs public records. More specifically, this will focus on obtaining public oral and written testimony on legislative matters.

The overall process of obtaining legislative or congressional committee documents is much more complex than regulatory comments in the federal register. This has proven to be a little problematic in obtaining a balanced set of regulatory and congressional/legislative public records that were not provided to me by case study site and/or participants.

What I've discovered is that although public affairs may provide a number of informational products to legislators, such as letters of support, they may be "public" but not of the "public record" per se. This makes them more difficult to obtain. In essence, the best form of public records for the legislative branch are obtained via written and oral testimony submitted to committees and subcommittees as part of official congressional hearings. These are then published in the Government Printing Office (GPO). The following are procedures for obtaining written and oral testimony for committee hearings:

- 1) Open web browser and go to <http://www.gpo.gov>
- 2) On the left-hand side, click on GPO's Federal Digital System.
- 3) In the middle of the page in small letters, click on "Advanced Search." This opens up a new page.

- 4) The Advanced Search Page contains two large boxes. While holding Ctrl, click on “Congressional record” “Committee hearings” and “Congressional Committee Prints.” Click “add” in the right box.
- 5) On the bottom of the page, type the text you want to search in the blank “search in” box. Use quotations to search for exact text.
- 6) Click search. The new page will show “hits.” At the top, sort by date, relevance, etc.
- 7) Each file is hyperlinked to the text match. You can also limit searches to just “committee hearings” for committee testimony or “Congressional record” which list when the exact text is noted in the official house or senate proceedings.

Obtaining public records for legislative and congressional committee proceedings is much more difficult than interacting with the regulations.gov web portal. I have been able to locate some public records as information products relevant for the study. Additional public records may be provided by research participants, but I do not want to “push” this ask for the risk of making them feel persuaded or uncomfortable. To the extent I can extract public records on my own, this is a preferred method as it also lessens the time and resources participants have to do to find and send along letters and testimony to me.

Journal Entry #9

August 4, 2016

8:01pm

Case Study Site Visit

Day 1, Case Site C

Today I concluded Day 1 of my case study site visit for the final organization. My first interview was excellent—thus far the best interview I have had with a public affairs professional. The participant essentially answered several questions before I got to them, and we had a very good dialogue that fostered in-depth thinking and contemplation. The participant was very prepared and provided great documentation to analyze. In a perfect world, all participants would be sharing their thoughts openly and have a good dialogue. At the very end, I was able to probe a little bit on an interesting nuance brought up that I didn't consider in my initial framework: the difference on how internal work is done preparing public testimony rather than a written information product.

The second interview was the exact opposite—it was really difficult to get into a groove with this participant, who immediately refused audio recording when seeing the equipment on the conference room table. This individual seemed to be on guard the entire time, and it was a challenge to set a comfortable environment. It almost seemed as if they didn't want to speak openly and freely, despite my explanation at the beginning of ensuring confidentiality. Overall, this interview was a bit disappointing.

Later in the day I headed over to other side of town to another building and spoke with a very experienced nonpublic affairs participant. This interview was really intriguing. I was impressed by how this participant viewed the role of public affairs but also clearly understood the role and value to the organization. Many times I felt like we weren't in an interview, but having a reflective conversation. This interview could have went on for hours, and I actually had to stop it at 60 minutes.

Overall, the first day of site visits went well. I was disappointed with one interview, but the other two more than made up for it. By now I am really feeling like I'm getting the semi-structured interview approach, and am comfortable with understanding my material to keep the interview as flowing as possible.

With the individual that refused recording, I am preparing as detailed notes as possible to send for member checking procedures.

Journal Entry #10

August 6, 2016

10:43am

Case Study Site Visit

Day 2, Case Site C

Yesterday I concluded my case study site visit for the final organization, packing in 5 interviews throughout the day. I was happy that there were no cancellations, although one participant arrived a little bit late. I was able to navigate the various buildings on campus with ease.

Overall, the interviews went very well, with the exception one that, again, like Thursday, seemed to be difficult to get into the groove and the participant seemed to be very on guard and rushed. The first interview was very interesting. It was with another nonpublic affairs professional with a lot of experience, acting as a consultant. The responses were very thoughtful, and introspective.

The next interview was also very helpful to the study. This interview I was able to dig deep into the internal dynamics of the organization. I learned a lot from this individual, including their method on how they store knowledge from nonpublic affairs stakeholders and use for later. The person was very open and critical to the current process, along with highlighting aspects that go really well.

The next interview by phone was also very good. We got into a very good discussion, and although my preference is for in-person interviewing, we got a good dialogue going. This person's response was very intriguing on how their interaction with public affairs commenced—it was actually by accident.

The next interview was with one of the most senior leaders of the organization. I was a little intimidated on how to approach this interview. I honestly expected to be interrupted often and rapidly dismissed due to the time constraints placed on someone with a very senior-level role. But I was pleasantly surprised. Our interview went really well, and it felt as if the participant, being so busy so much, doesn't have much time to really think about current practices and how things are going, and what could be done better. This was refreshing because the participant also appeared to be very open and honest, while others at times it seems they are really on guard. I tried to alleviate as much as possible with apprehension, but there is only so much I can do.

The final interview was not audio recorded, as the participant did not consent to recording. However, the person also seemed a little rushed and wanted to do other things. The person was distracted with their phone and I could tell their interest in participating

was very low. We went through the questions and closed the interview. It was a little disappointing finish, but most of the other interviews went by very well.

Journal Entry #11

October 23, 2016

4:00pm

Final Data Collection Thoughts

In closing, I am writing a few thoughts on data collection for this study.

First, transcribing interviews takes a very long time to do on own. I will likely never do this again. In generally, for every 1 minute of interview time equated to about 3-4 minutes of transcribing. A one-hour interview required about 3+hours of transcribing. Not to mention the intensity of the work in concentrating on responses to ensure accuracy.

Second, be better prepared for participants to decline audio recording. The first time this occurred, I was a little taken back. I didn't object, but I also had to pivot a bit and get ready to take really good notes. I also had to adjust my interviewing a little bit to do a brief recap after each response to ensure my notes were accurate.

Third, prepare a better interview protocol format. I searched online for suggestions/templates, but none really seemed to fit. I would have ideally liked to have typed on my laptop interview notes, but I had a feeling the sound of typing would have been a distraction to the participant. Perhaps a tablet with a silent keyboard would have been better. My handwriting is not very good and my notes were all over the place.

Fourth, build in a little time for interview de-brief with notes. This actually happened naturally, and only a few times I had to rush out to another office or usher in another participant into the conference room with little or no time in-between. This was very helpful.

Fifth, asking for documents did go over as well as I would have liked. Those participants willing to share documents were very helpful, but most of the participants were reluctant to share anything in writing.

Appendix G: Memos

Memo 1: Ad-Hoc and Informal

In responding to interview questions regarding communication, engagement, and interaction respondents re-iterated the notion of informality. This seems to suggest interaction, engagement, and subsequent knowledge transfer happens informally on an as-needed basis. This also may point to the importance of filtering and/or prioritization of what is passed along as information or requested for input. Internal public affairs information that flows consistently is usually in forms of updates and news articles to management level. Information can also flow informally, which may be more specific to the context of a specific public policy issue and be targeted to a specific individual or department.

Memo 2: Content Expert as Secondary Contact in Information Products

In organization B most of the information products contained a primary signer (leader) at the chief, vice-president, or executive director level, but many had others as contacts at the very end of the information product.

This suggests that the signer is the decision-maker, but not necessarily the content expert. Although their title and role in the organization provides legitimacy and approval, much of the knowledge resides in lower level employees, and hence, include those individuals and their contact information on the information product for reference.

Memo 3: Filtering

Public affairs need to be cognizant of what is sent along internally for input/feedback. This usually goes through a filtering process by which public policy proposals are vetted before being communicated to nonpublic affairs and requested for knowledge input.

Filtering of public policy is directly applying public affairs knowledge as part of the transfer process. This can also happen before requests for input from internal stakeholders and also if requests come from nonpublic affairs stakeholders.

Memo 4: Formality in Relation to Impact

Thus far, most of the evidence suggests the engagement of public affairs internally is ad-hoc and informal. However, there is evidence suggesting a greater formality occurs in relation to the scope of the perceived impact of the public policy (law, bill, or proposed rule). More formality means a group or committee, broader PA stakeholder response, more consistent interaction (meetings, dialogue), and integration to the organization's operational strategy.

Memo 5: Difference between legislation and rulemaking processes

In case site C, there seems to be a different process in responding to legislation versus proposed rulemaking. Since key proposed rules (at the federal level) are fairly consistent in terms of time periods when released, this creates a bit of anticipation of issues that are necessary to look into. In the case of annual rulemaking, several NPA stakeholders have indicated they already have awareness of the timeframes and often the issues that surround rulemaking issues.

This adds to the evidence of public policy ownership by non-PA stakeholders. Policy issues that are consistently addressed in a rulemaking process that follows a typical time during the year.

Memo 6: Nonpublic Affairs Intraorganizational Engagement Best Practices

At the conclusion of the dissertation, there will be presented some best practices for public affairs professionals. This aligns with Walden's mission of being scholar-practitioners and adds value to the practicing professional.

- Provide feedback in a timely manner
- Prioritize
 - “When asked by government relations to respond to a policy or rule, the request becomes the highest priority task.” (NPAC1)
- Communicate facts versus opinions
- Willingness to learn public policy issues
- Knowledge Transfer
 - Summaries
 - Bullet points
 - Snippets
 - Responsibility/ownership to comment on provisions applicable to their area or function, generally citing sections and/or page numbers of the proposed rule.

Memo 7: Public Affairs Intraorganizational Engagement Best Practices

At the conclusion of the dissertation, there will be presented some best practices for public affairs professionals. This aligns with Walden's mission of being scholar-practitioners and adds value to the practicing professional.

- Develop and maintain list of internal experts
 - Schedule periodic meetings with internal experts most often consulted on public policy issues.
- Use political acumen (filter) to avoid sharing too much volume of information
 - Relevance
 - Perceived problems
 - Potential impact
 - Viability of passage
- Be cognizant of time you are taking away from NPAs when requesting their input/expertise
- In providing information on a proposal:
 - Be concise
 - Include the full text of the bill/proposed rule
 - Provide a summary
 - Highlight salient points
 - Include relevant supplemental materials if necessary (resource links, news articles, etc.)
 - Prepping questions to guide analysis or response
 - Next Steps

- Deadline
- Be appreciative of feedback provided
- Keep stakeholders updated, especially with the follow-up (close the loop)
- Review
 - Don't be shy about drafting a shell, even if "terrible"
 - Allow those that provide feedback a chance to review

Memo 8: Public Affairs Structure and Decision-making

There appears to be a relationship on the structure of public affairs and decisionmaking. In case site A, the structure of public affairs is quite simple: two individuals reporting directly to the system CEO. The system CEO serves as the final decisionmaker. Both public affairs participants liked the seamless access to the organizational leader and had an efficient flow to the top. Could this be a relationship that sheds light on decision-making processes?

Case site B had a more complex decision-making structure which varied by the type of leader. However, most of the guidance fell upon the service line executive by which most of the proposed public policy impacted. Sometimes, major issues or issues needing conflict resolution headed to the leadership team. Case site C also had a similar decision-making process to case site B. Each executive of areas that were impacted had a lot of influence on providing input and feedback. Only very occasionally would policy issues rise to the level of the CEO or executive level committee.

Memo 9: Two-way and Reciprocation

In responding to interview questions regarding communication, engagement, and interaction with public affairs and nonpublic affairs has revolved around two-way.

Two-way has been used to describe public affairs internal information flow. Information comes from public affairs in the form of news articles, policy updates, and proposed policy. Generally updates are consistent and fairly structured, such as daily or weekly news articles or updates. This is important for public affairs to maintain that consistent internal communication. This is an opportunity for nonpublic affairs to stay updated on policy and politics.

Two-way has been noted to describe knowledge transfer (sender/receiver). When public affairs sends requests for input on public policy, it is assumed the request is important and this typically initiates the knowledge transfer process. Public affairs provide political acumen and awareness, and their knowledge is utilized as a means of policy prioritization and then transfer the information on proposed policy to nonpublic affairs personnel. Knowledge is transferred to public affairs in the form of informalized feedback and input. This is usually ad-hoc.

Two-way is also used inversely; when nonpublic affairs provide information on a proposed policy to public affairs. Public affairs, in turn, communicate the likelihood of advancement, the status, and political implications. The key here is that knowledge is being transferred from both public and nonpublic affairs; both are taking the role as the sender and receiver, depending on who initiated and the context of the initiation. There is an element of reciprocation.

Memo 10: Implications for Public Policy and Administration

Throughout this study, the emphasis has been on intraorganizational structures and processes for public affairs. The underlying process of the intraorganizational focus has been the output: quality information and knowledge-based products to policymakers. This study is expected to benefit fellow public affairs professionals in understanding the nuances of internal engagement, but also how to connect the internal process to policymaking. The theoretical framework of knowledge transfer (holistic) serves this study well. If public affairs professionals can effectively leverage and utilize knowledge of internal professionals, their output (products) will be more specific and effective. As there is a call and need for input in the policymaking process, public affairs are best positioned to engage in policymaking with the knowledge of internal professionals. Interview responses indicate internal nonpublic affairs stakeholders are busy with their core roles in the organization, so it is critical public affairs act as a conduit to bring public policy opportunities NPA stakeholders in an effective manner which facilitates engagement.

Policymakers are constantly looking for ways to lower cost and reform the delivery system. Healthcare delivery organizations have the opportunity to shape public policy, but providing expertise and input is only as strong as the internal processes which facilitate knowledge transfer. If policymakers are able to obtain the knowledge of medical professionals effectively and efficiently through public affairs, then expertise is directly linked to public policy.

Appendix H: Cross-Case Coding Matrix

Table D1

Code Families

Key	Code Family (Research Questions)
R1	How do public affairs engage and interact with intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?
R2	How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
R3	What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
R4	How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
R5	How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Table D2

Coding Matrix

Code Name	Definition	Code Family	<i>n</i>	Interview Participants	Org Docs	Public Records
Ad-hoc	Intraorganizational interaction on public policy issues as needed.	R1	30	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPA6, NPA11, NPAB2, NPAB5,		

(table continues)

				PAB1, PAB3, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1	
Administrative function	Employees/stakeholders serving in a role that is not direct patient care.	R1	13	NPA1, NPA7, NPA9, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, NPAC3, NPAC4	B1
Ambiguity	Not apparent. Often general, high level, lacking specifics.	R3	8	NPAB7, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC3, PAC2	
Bidirectional learning; Holistic Knowledge Transfer	Holistic knowledge transfer between public affairs and nonpublic affairs. Each group serving as the sender and receiver of knowledge.	R1 R5	40	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB7, PAB1, PAB3, NPAC2	A11 A17 A5
Boundary spanning	Describes the public affairs function as one that interacts with stakeholders across many departments and functions of the organization.	R2	2	PA2, PAB6	
CEO as Decision maker	The organization chief executive officer serves as the final decision-making on public affairs information products on behalf of the organization.	R2 R4	15	NPA1, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2	Rec5 Rec6 Rec7
Collaboration	Working together toward a common goal or on a shared task.	R1	4	NPAB4, PAB4, PAC2	

(table continues)

Committee or Group Response	Rather than an individual or few individuals, an established group or committee serves as the entity in responding to a particular public policy issue.	R4 R5	38	NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAB7, PAB2, PAB6, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3		
Complexity	Complicated. Challenging. Difficult. Relates to the nature of public policy proposals.	R3	11	NPA1, NPA2 NPA4, PA1, NPAC1, NPAC3		
Concise	Brief, short.	R1	3	PAB1, PAB3, PAB2		
Conflict of Opinion	Problem or disagreement between two or more individuals.	R3	16	NPA4, NPA8, NPA9, PA2, NPAC4, PAC3, NPAB2	A6	
Consistent Interaction	Regular engagement between stakeholders.	R1	21	NPA7, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, NPAB7, PAB6, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3		
Consistent Process	Regular, methodical approach, used to describe internal outreach process.	R1	4	PAC1, PAC3	C2	C6
Content Expertise	Knowledge provided by nonpublic affairs stakeholders integrated into information	R5	18			A3, A4, A6, <i>(table continues)</i>

	products.					B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, C1, C3, C4, C5, C6
Decision-maker Access	Approachability with ease to those needing to approve or validate a position or action on public policy.	R2 R4	4	PA1, PA2		
Dedicated NPA Stakeholder	Nonpublic affairs individual(s) serving as point of contact for public policy issues.	R4	27	NPA2, NPA3, NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB4, NPAB7, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC3, PAC1, PAC3		B5
Disconnection	Cut off, disassociate. Used to describe relationship issues between public affairs and nonpublic affairs.	R3	6	NPA2, NPA5, PA1		
Email Communication	Electronic mail communication.	R1	54	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4	A1 A3 A10 A5 A6 C5	
Finding the Right NPA Stakeholder	Public affairs problem of determining the individual, department or service line	R3	19	PA2, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC4,	C4 C5	(table continues)

	where nonpublic affairs stakeholders reside which possess tacit expertise useful for public policy issues.			PAC1, PAC2, PAC3	
Follow-up and close the loop	Identified by nonpublic affairs stakeholders, public affairs should re-circulate information on a rule or law enacted to individuals providing expertise on the information product.	R3	10	NPA9, NPAB2, NPAC3	C4
Formalization	Structure, boundaries, responsibilities in carrying out a task, project or providing public policy input.	R2	7	NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11	
Full Bill or Proposal	Complete text of legislation or rule.	R1 R3	15	NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, PA2, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC3	C5
Guiding Questions	Specific, prefatory inquiries provided by public affairs to assist in gathering stakeholder input.	R1	2	PAC1	
Implementation	Operationalizing codified public policy legislation and/or rulemaking into organization practice.	R1	2	NPAC3, PAC3	
Individualize	Format, target communication to be user-friendly to the receiver.	R1	4	PAC1	

(table continues)

Informal	Casual interaction.	R1	20	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB3, NPAC2, PAC1		
Information Product Review	Review of public affairs strategy including expert testimony, lobbying, comment letters, data, research projects, and position papers.	R1	10	PA1, PA2, NPA1, NPAB2, PAB2, PAC1	A17 A6 C2	A4
Internal Communication	Communication within the organization (intraorganizational).	R1	8	NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAB7, PAB2		
Internal Relationships	Intraorganizational connections between stakeholders.	R1	9	NPA2, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1		
Knowledge Storing	Process of maintaining intraorganizational feedback/input for later use and application into public affairs information products.	R1	3	PAC3	C3	
Lack of Information Availability	Shortage of available information in responding to a public policy issue.	R3	3	PA1, PAB1, NPAB7		
Lack of Resources	Personnel, materials, or bandwidth deficiency necessary to respond to public policy issues.	R3	7	NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB4, NPAB7, PAB6, PAC3		

(table continues)

Lack of Responsiveness	Public affairs problem when nonpublic affairs stakeholders do not respond to inquiries on public policy issues.	R3	7	PA2, NPAB2, PAB4, NPAC4, PAC3, NPA7		
Lack of Time	Too busy or too many responsibilities to respond to public policy issues from public affairs.	R3	35	NPA1, NPA2, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA9, PA1, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, NPAB7, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3,	A6	
Lack of understanding Public Affairs	Perceived knowledge deficiency on the role, function, and purpose of public affairs.	R3	6	PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB4		
Leadership Team	Group of individuals serving in a decision-making capacity at organizations.	R4	12	PAB1, PAB4, PAB2	B1	B1 B2 B5
Meetings	Arrangement of two or more people. Used in relation to public affairs and nonpublic affairs specifically coming together to discuss public policy proposals.	R1	17	NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3, NPAB7, PAB6, PAC1, PAC3	A3	
News and information updates	Relating to public affairs information and public policy news delivered by public affairs professionals within their organization.	R1	30	NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB6, PAC1, PA2, PAC2	A16	

(table continues)

News Article on proposal	Media story relating to a public policy proposal.	R1	3	NPA4	A3 A16	
NPA Management Level	Nonpublic affairs stakeholders interacting on policy issues serving in a management role, but not executive.	R1	31	NPA1, NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, PA1, PA2, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC4		B1
NPA Distribution and Facilitation	Often from a dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder, assuming the role of facilitating public policy feedback amongst their co-workers or department members.	R1	38	NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, PA1, PA2, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAB7	C4	
NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy	Integrating nonpublic affairs stakeholders knowledge into public affairs information products.	R5	57	NPA1, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, PA1, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAB7, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC2, PAC3	A6	A1, A2, A3 A4, A6, A7 B2, B4, C4 C5
NPA External Resources	Nonpublic affairs stakeholders seek and utilize resources outside the organizational infrastructure to use in responding to public policy issues.	R5	35	NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC4, PAC1	A2 A10 A15 A8 C5	(table continues)

NPA Initiates Interaction	Nonpublic affairs stakeholders commence the first communication on a public policy issue.	R1	22	NPAB4, PAB1, PAB4, NPAB7, NPAB2, NPA4, NPAC1, NAC4, PAC1, PAC2		
NPA Internal Resources	Personnel, materials available for nonpublic affairs stakeholders to leverage in analyzing and responding to public policy issues.	R5	10	NPA7, NPA8, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1		
NPA Knowledge Transfer	Expertise shared from nonpublic affairs stakeholders to public affairs.	R5	59	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3, NPAB7, NPAC1, NPAC2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC3, PAC4	A2 A11 A5 A6 A7 C2	B6
NPA Ownership and Responsibility	Nonpublic affairs stakeholders possessing accountability for certain public policy issues.	R1	19	NPA5, NPA6, NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, NPAC1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3		
NPA Policy Involvement	Nonpublic affairs stakeholders involved in public policy issues, usually with external trade associations.	R5	7	NPAB2, PAB1, PAB2		
PA Advisory	Group providing oversight and guidance	R2	9	PA2		A11

(table continues)

Committee	to organizational public affairs.	R4			A13 A14	
PA Best Practices	Considered consistent or supported structure, processes, strategies and tactics for public affairs professionals to best execute the practice of the function.	R1 R2 R3 R4 R5	13	NPAC1, NPAC4, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4	C2 C5	C4 C5 C6
PA Collating Input and Knowledge	Public affairs serves as a consistent, centralized function for collating intraorganizational feedback from nonpublic affairs stakeholders on public policy proposals.	R1	23	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA7, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, NPAC1, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3	C2 A3	
PA Decision making	Describe the process for decision making in public affairs activities.	R4	39	PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC3, NPAC4, PaC1, PAC3	B3 B4 C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7	B1 B2 B3 B4 B6 B7 B10 B8 B9
PA Engagement Art	The practice of public affairs is very social, individualized, and tailored to the situation, personnel, and organization. It does not follow a methodological approach.	R1	29	PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB4, PAB2, PAC1, PAC3	A9	
PA External	Public affairs utilize external information	R1	6	NPAB2, PAB1, PAB3,		

(table continues)

Resources	for use in information products.	R5		PAB4	
PA Filter	Cognizant of internal stakeholders and using political acumen, the practice of vetting public policy issues and information before distributing to nonpublic affairs stakeholders for feedback.	R1	39	NPA1, NPA2, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, PA2, PAB1, PAB2, PAB3, PAB4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4, NPAB2, NPAB5	
PA Information Flow	The general act of distributing public affairs information intraorganizationally.	R1	36	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2	A10 A4
PA Information flow to internal experts	The act and process of distributing public policy information to intraorganizational nonpublic affairs stakeholders.	R1	62	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4	A1 A16 A4 B2 C2
PA Initiates Interaction	Public affairs commence the first communication on a public policy issue.	R1	28	NPA1, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, NPAC1, NPAC4,	A5 C2

(table continues)

				PAC3	
PA Knowledge Transfer	Expertise on public policy issues and politics is shared from public affairs to nonpublic affairs stakeholders.	R1 R5	30	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, PAC1, PaC3, PAC4	A1 A3 A11
PA Policy Agenda	Strategies and issues identified for engagement and action. Often used in public affairs to guide work on an annual or biennium basis.	R2	2	PA2	A11
PA Preparation	Public affairs craft plans for engagement on policy issues with nonpublic affairs professionals. Used for in-person meetings or oral engagement.	R1 R2	2		A1 A3
PA Presentations	Public affairs prepare and deliver formal speeches internally for nonpublic affairs stakeholders.	R1	4	PAB3, PAB4	
PA Relationships	The act of connecting public affairs with nonpublic affairs stakeholders within organizations.	R1	2	PA1, PA2	
PA Structure	Relates to how public affairs department or function is staffed, role distribution, placed and organized hierarchically	R2	18	PAB1, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC3, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4	A14 B1 C1 <i>(table continues)</i>

	within the healthcare delivery organization.				
Periodic Meetings or Check-ins	Occasional, standing scheduled interaction on public policy issues.	R1	18	NPA3, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAC3, NPAB7, PAB6, PAB3	
Phone Communication	Interaction via telephone.	R1	18	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, NPAB2, PAB4, PAC1, PA2	A6
Political Capital	Measuring the stock available when engaging with policymakers. In practice, political capital is used to describe the frequency and the extent of advocacy with policymakers. The more frequent the interaction, the more political capital is expended.	R1 R3	8	NPAB5, PAB1, PAB4, PAB2	
Prioritization	Act of classifying tasks/requests by importance. <i>See prioritization issues.</i>	R3	14	NPA1, NPA2, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAC1, NPAC3, PAC1	
Prioritization issues	Public affairs problem where there is a disconnection between the perceived rank or level of tasks being requested to	R3	19	NPA8, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB4,	(table continues)

	engage on/with.			NPAC2, NPAC3, PAC1	
Proactiveness	Anticipation. Performed in relation to engaging on public policy early in the process.	R3	4	NPA1, NPA3, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11	
Public Policy Interest	Nonpublic affairs having an interest in public policy and political affairs.	R5	2	NPAB2	
Reciprocation	Balanced back-and-forth interaction. Used to describe the intraorganizational engagement that is perceived as equitable between public affairs and nonpublic affairs.	R1	35	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA8, NPA9, PA1, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB2, NPAC1	A17
Redundancy of Information	Generally via email communication, relates to the duplication of public policy information being sent/received.	R3	7	NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, PA2, NPAC4, PAC3	
Report to Senior Leadership	Organizational hierarchy where employees at the highest level in the organization are responsible for public affairs function management.	R2 R4	3	PA1, PA2	
Responsiveness	Timely interaction when requested. Accessible.	R1 R3	2	NPAB2, PAB3	
Saliency	Identification of the most relevant characteristics of a particular public policy proposal.	R1	26	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA9, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1,	B2 C2 C5

(table continues)

				PAB4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3		
Senior Leadership	Employees acting in a management capacity, including the chief or vice-president level.	R2 R4	8	NPA1, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPAC3, PAC3	A11	
Snippets of knowledge	Pieces. Short comments in response to proposed policy from nonpublic affairs stakeholders.	R1 R5	5	PA1	A6 A7	A3
Summarize	Often used in public affairs knowledge transfer, process of distilling and paraphrasing often lengthy, complex public policy proposals by highlighting the relevant points of interest prior to delivering to nonpublic affairs stakeholders.	R1 R5	38	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA9, PA1, PA2, NPAB2, NPAB4, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC1, NPAC3, NPAC4, PAC1, PAC2, PAC3	A10 A13 A6 C2 C5	
Support PA Function	Organizational resources allocated and positivity communicated internally towards organizational public affairs function.	R2	21	NPA1, NPA3, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA9, PA2, NPAB2, PAB1, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC1, PAC2	A11 A13	
Table of Contents	Categorizing and presenting markers for seeking relevant information. Often used in an email to find relevant sections in a long proposed rule or legislation.	R1	2	NPAC1, NPAC4		

(table continues)

Timely	Efficient responsiveness to requests for input.	R3	15	NPA1, NPA3, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, PA1, PAB1, PAB3, PAB4, PAB2, NPAC1, NPAC3, PAC2, PAC3	
Tracking	System of storing information and use for providing updates on public policy issues.	R1	4	PAC1, PAC3	C3
Volume	High quantity, lengthy, too many. Described in relation to information quantity, length and delivered via email.	R3	29	NPA1, NPA2, NPA3, NPA4, NPA5, NPA6, NPA11, NPA7, NPA8, NPAB2, NPAB5, PAB1, PAB4, NPAC3, PAC2, PAC3, PAC4	

Appendix I: Case Study Site Reports

Case Study Site A Report

The purpose of this document provides a case study report on site A. This case site was the first of three sites as part of a collective case study. The report is intended as a framework for cross-case synthesis in the final doctoral dissertation. Specifically, this report will: describe the site, outline methodology, data analysis, themes, discussion and conclusion.

Case Site Description

Aligning with the methodology in Chapter 3 for purposeful sampling, case site A is an healthcare delivery system located in the upper Midwest of the United States. The healthcare delivery organization has clinical, hospital, and health insurance plan under a single system corporate structure. The organization has a dedicated public affairs department with two individuals; one oversees policy issues at the federal government level while another manages the state level policy portfolio.

Research Questions

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?

4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Data Collection

Procedures

I visited case site A for a total of three business days from January 27-January 30, 2016. Interviews were scheduled with each participant (12 total) in-person at the site. Interviews were audio recorded. Field notes were taken during the interviews and saved electronically and three journal entries were crafted during the site visit. Following the site visit, thank you emails were delivered to all participants. Interview audio was transcribed by me, and individually emailed to each participant, allowing four weeks for review for accuracy. Extensions for review time were granted upon request.

Data Sources

- Primary Source: Interview data
 - In-person interviews: $n = 12$
 - Phone interviews: $n = 0$
 - Total participants: $N = 12$
 - Male participants: $n = 4$
 - Female participants: $n = 8$
 - Public Affairs participants: $n = 2$
 - Male participants: $n = 2$
 - Female participants: $n = 0$
 - Nonpublic affairs participants: $n = 10$

- Male participants: $n = 2$
- Female participants: $n = 8$
- Transcripts emailed out for checking with four weeks review: Yes
- Responses from transcript checking: 5
- Average interview duration: approximately 45 minutes. The maximum interview length was 60 minutes, with one interview going approximately 80 minutes at the discretion of the interviewee.
- Secondary Sources
 - Documents provided by organization participants and reviewed using documentation protocol: 17
 - Archival/Public Records obtained by organization participants or by researcher in public domains and reviewed using public record protocol: 7
 - Field notes: Yes, one generated for each interview session.
 - Site Visit Journal Entries: 3

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred in tandem; however, most of the data analysis was performed during the coding process which followed the generation of transcripts and document reviews. Three thematic memos were crafted following the case site visit A and B but before coding of the transcripts. This helped establish initial codes

for data analysis, which used an open coding approach, borrowed from grounded theory designs, as explained in Chapter 3.

The following describes the data analysis process for Case Site A:

1. Thematic memos crafted immediately following site visits;
2. Interview transcripts generated and coded with Atlas ti. CAQDAS from the ground up using an open approach;
3. Codes were placed into families aligned with each corresponding research question along with the theoretical framework;
4. Codes reviewed for volume of citations (number of times text cited with code) to determine strength and prevalence;
5. Codes with less than 3-assigned passages were re-reviewed to determine alignment or relationship with other codes (known as density in Atlas ti.);
6. Coded text/passages from each family generated into corresponding code family reports with specific citations to data, saved to case study database and reviewed for themes;
7. Seminal quotes highlighted in code family reports for specific context;
8. Additional memos crafted from the coded data to aid in thematic development, aligning with using a funnel approach to hone in on key themes for cross-case synthesis.

Code List and Families

The following is the code list and families for analyzing interview transcripts, organizational documentation, and public records for case site A:

Code Families

Code Family: Holistic Knowledge Transfer

Codes (3): [Holistic Knowledge Transfer] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [PA Knowledge Transfer]

Quotation(s): 50

Code Family: How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?

Codes (6): [CEO as Decisionmaker] [Committee or Group Response] [Decisionmaker Access] [Dedicated NPA Stakeholder] [PA Advisory Committee] [Senior Leadership]

Quotation(s): 51

Code Family: How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Codes (13): [Administrative function] [Bidirectional learning] [Committee or Group Response] [Formalization] [Information Product Review] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA External Resources] [NPA Internal Resources] [NPA Knowledge Transfer] [NPA Policy Analysis] [PA Advisory Committee] [PA Collating Input/Knowledge] [Snippets of knowledge]

Quotation(s): 132

Code Family: How do public affairs engage and interact with intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Codes (36): [Ad-hoc] [Appreciation] [Consistent Interaction and Issues] [Dedicated NPA Stakeholder] [Email Communication] [Full Bill or Proposal] [Informal] [Information Product Review] [Intraorganizational Relationship] [Meetings] [News & Information Updates] [News Article on proposal] [Non-Leadership Interaction] [Notification and Update] [NPA Director or Manager Level] [NPA Filter and Distribution] [NPA Ownership and Responsibility] [NPA Start Interaction] [PA Advisory Committee] [PA Collating Input/Knowledge] [PA Conduit] [PA Engagement Art] [PA Filter] [PA Information Flow] [PA Information Flows to Internal Experts] [PA initiates interaction] [PA Relationships] [Periodic Meetings or Check-ins] [Phone Communication] [Power Points] [Prioritization] [Reciprocation] [Saliency] [Summarize] [Trust] [Word Document Editing]

Quotation(s): 308

Code Family: How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?

Codes (12): [Boundary Spanning] [Cumbersome Structure] [Formalization] [PA Advisory Committee] [PA Function Expectations] [PA Oversight] [PA Policy Agenda] [PA Preparation] [PA Structure] [Report to Senior Leadership] [Senior Leadership] [Support PA function]

Quotation(s): 38

Code Family: What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?

Codes (19): [Complexity] [Conflict of Opinion] [Disconnection] [Finding Right NPA Stakeholder] [Follow-up and close the loop] [Lack of Information Sharing] [Lack of Prioritization] [Lack of Time] [Lack of Understanding] [Not informed] [PA Cognizant of Time] [Proactiveness] [Redundancy of information] [System or Organization Perspective] [Timely] [Volume]

Quotation(s): 90

Memos

Thematic memos were composed to aid in data analysis with identifying themes.

Memos crafted included the following titles and themes:

- Ad-hoc and informal intraorganizational engagement
- PA filtering
- Two-way communication and engagement
- Formality of engagement related to level of policy impact
- PA best practices
- PA structure and decision-making

Results/Themes

Themes are generated from the Atlas ti. codes/families and researcher generated memos and aligned to answer the primary research question and sub questions. This

section outlines the key themes for each research question. The primary research question generated the most codes and code families from the data.

Primary Research Question

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

- 1) Overarching theme: PA engagement is an Art
 - a) No formula exists for interaction intraorganizationally
 - b) Highly social
 - c) View as a service agency oriented intraorganizationally
- 2) Engagement and Interaction
 - a) Reciprocation and bidirectional interaction
 - i) PA commences interaction
 - (1) PA Filter and Distribution
 - (a) Filters by using acumen to determine political viability/priority of proposed policy
 - (b) Cognizant of NPA time toward organizational role
 - (2) PA acts as a conduit
 - (3) Facilitates opinions/thoughts
 - ii) NPA commences interaction
 - (1) Involvement in external board or association
 - (2) Asks for political viability
 - (3) Other internal stakeholders

- (a) Issue identification
- b) Ad-hoc
 - i) As issues come up
- c) Informal
 - i) Would like more contact with public affairs
- d) Consistent interaction
 - i) Policy advisory committee
 - ii) Intraorganizational Relationship purposes
 - iii) Annual proposed rule
 - iv) Monthly or bi-monthly meetings or conference calls
 - v) Provide notification and status updates on policy issues (keep in loop)
- e) Dedicated NPA stakeholder
 - i) Typically at director/manager level
 - ii) High level, efficient response
 - iii) Sent to downline, subject matter experts
 - (1) PA relies on the diffusion/outreach to downline subject matter experts
 - iv) NPA ownership and responsibility
 - (1) Certain consistent policy issues are owned by an NPA stakeholder
- 3) Communication
 - a) Email
 - i) Is strongest form of communication

- ii) PA Best Practice
 - (1) Raw information, include full bill or proposal
 - (2) Summary or synthesis
 - (3) Highlight the salient points
 - (4) News article on the policy issue
 - (5) Allow opportunity to review information product before public delivery
 - (a) Use track changes function
 - (b) Unless minor modifications
 - (6) Policy news and information updates
 - (a) Consistent/daily
 - (7) NPA Best Practices
 - (a) Snippets
 - (b) Analytics
- b) Phone
 - i) Unscheduled and scheduled
- c) Meetings
 - i) Used for more impactful issues

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
 - a. Two representatives; one state, one federal (PA1, PA2)
 - b. Reports directly to CEO (PA1, PA2)

- i. Critical to have direct line to decisionmakers
 - c. Boundary spanning function
 - i. Viewed as a service agency to organization (PA2)
 - ii. Part of system even though organization is comprised of departments (PA1, PA2)
 - d. Higher impact policy is reviewed by group rather than rapidly piped to CEO
 - e. Advisory Committee/Group comprised of upper level leaders/management; supports public affairs work (PA1, PA2)
- 2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
 - a. NPA perspective
 - i. Lack of time
 - ii. Complexity
 - iii. Volume/length of information relevant to policy
 - iv. Lack of closing the loop
 - v. Lack of organization/system perspective
 - b. PA perspective
 - i. Conflict of opinion
 - ii. Timely response
 - iii. Finding right NPA stakeholder
 - iv. Lack of prioritization of public policy issues

1. Most are day to day operations
 - v. Lack of system or organization perspective
 - vi. Lack of understanding nuances of government affairs
 - vii. Lack of information sharing
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
 - a. CEO as final decision maker; actively involved
 - i. Senior leadership helps in making decisions
 - b. Committee or group-level response/decision
 - i. Usually is done for policy issues/laws with perceived significant impact
 - ii. Used to have committee make decisions; now not actively involved
 - iii. Advisory committee to help with buy-in
 - iv. Good to have dedicated NPA stakeholder to help with knowledge
 - c. Critical for public affairs to have a direct, efficient pipeline to decision makers
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?
 - a. External Information Products
 - i. Regulatory comments
 - ii. Meetings

- iii. Position letters
- iv. Testimony
- b. Knowledge transfer
 - i. Data analysis
 - ii. Impact analyses
 - iii. Reports
 - iv. Informal feedback/snippets
- 5. Theoretical framework: Holistic knowledge transfer
 - a. Strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory
 - i. Bidirectional learning
 - ii. Two-way communication
 - iii. PA-NPA Engagement reciprocation

Discussion

The primary purpose of this case study was to investigate the engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals in healthcare delivery organizations. The subquestions helped provide boundaries to ensure responses were honed in to core study purpose.

Public affairs, known as government relations in this organization, is a very small boundary spanning function. Comprised of two individuals, one is dedicated to managing state-level policy issues while the other manages federal issues. Although the organization is comprised of different business functions and wholly owned affiliates, the public affairs function reports to the system as a whole and directly to the system chief

executive officer (CEO). The public affairs participants view their function as a service agency, and nonpublic affairs stakeholders as their customers.

As a general principle, the practice of public affairs was noted by both public affairs participants as an art and not a science. The social aspects of the profession can be unpredictable and strongly relationship, task, and issue-oriented. There appears to be no formula for public affairs and specifically related to intraorganizational engagement. This may contribute to the lack of an overarching theory of public affairs in the literature. The organization has a public policy advisory committee comprised of approximately 12 members. Members are typically various leaders within the organization, which helps facilitate knowledge transfer, but currently does not comprise direct decision-making authority. Both public affairs participants noted the importance of having seamless access to organizational decision makers.

Most of the intraorganizational engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders is ad-hoc. In other words, public affairs and nonpublic affairs only interact and engage as needed, or when necessary to address or respond to a public policy issue. Evidence suggests the initiator of the engagement can be either public affairs or nonpublic affairs, but appears to be more towards public affairs commencing the communication on policy issues. The primary form of communication is email, supported by telephone interaction, and in-person or virtual meetings.

Although most of the interaction is on an as-needed basis, some intraorganizational engagement is consistent. Consistent engagement is executed by scheduled periodic meetings or check-ins between public affairs and nonpublic affairs

stakeholders, or as part of an intraorganizational advisory committee. This organization uses an advisory committee to discuss public policy issues on a quarterly basis. The committee used to be more formalized as a decision-making entity, but has since moved away to an advisory group.

Prior to any engagement from public affairs, the first step is to filter the policy issue. Public affairs utilizes their political acumen to determine the viability of a proposal prior to engaging with nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Employing political acumen is performed due the importance of not overburdening nonpublic affairs professionals on matters of unimportance or minimal likelihood of gaining political traction.

If the policy issue is determined to merit intraorganizational engagement by public affairs, the efficient identification of a nonpublic affairs stakeholder, or point person, is critical to effective engagement. This begins the art of engagement that may be individually designed and driven. This primary contact, usually an administrative function of the organization at the manager or director level, serves as the lead of the department or portion of the organization impacted or most relevant to responding to the policy matter inquiry. Public affairs participants presumed that if the issue or question(s) delivered to the dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder cannot be addressed by that specific individual, it is the responsibility of the nonpublic affairs stakeholder to transfer the inquiry to others within their department/function/downline to respond.

To facilitate effective information sharing and communication via email, public affairs should communicate clearly and concisely. In the email, public affairs should include an attachment or link to the full text of the proposal(s), brief summary of salient

points, status, and links to any relevant news article or sources. This assures the communication product has sufficient resources and information to aid the response from the nonpublic affairs stakeholder being asked to provide input. Most often in responding, nonpublic affairs stakeholders provide brief comments or snippets of knowledge back to public affairs to be integrated into an external information product. Sometimes nonpublic affairs stakeholder provide detailed commentary, or provide direct feedback into a draft information product (i.e. tracked changes function). Rarely do nonpublic affairs provide a formal report or analytical memo in response to public policy proposals, highlighting the predominance of informal, ad-hoc interaction.

There are numerous perceived barriers to effective intraorganizational engagement. The two primary barriers from the perspective of the nonpublic affairs stakeholder are the lack of time and the high volume of information relevant to public policy. The first barrier was presented consistently by nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Being able to respond to public policy issues in essence takes them away from their primary functions within the organization. Issues with fitting in the time to respond, often under a fairly tight deadline (also noted as a barrier), has strong evidence as a barrier. The other barrier is the volume of information on policy matters. Legislation and proposed administrative rules can be hundreds of pages in length, requiring several hours spent on analyzing the raw information for the important provisions related to the specific nonpublic affairs function. This reinforces the importance for public affairs to provide a summary and highlight the salient points of a proposed policy.

From the public affairs perspective, primary barriers are lack of timely response to inquiries, finding the right stakeholder, lack of understanding a system perspective perpetuated by the silo effect, and challenges with generally understanding the function of public affairs. In many instances, public affairs sends an inquiry (after filtering) to a nonpublic affairs stakeholder seeking a response, often with a quick turnaround such as responding to a reporter on a publication or policymaker inquiry, or public testimony before a committee. Not receiving a timely response makes it very challenging for public affairs to maintain external relationships and be responsive. Lack of responsiveness impacts the quality and context of an external information product, and may miss opportunities for policy engagement. Next, if a public affairs professional doesn't know where to send a proposed public policy item, it can be a challenge to track down the best stakeholder, especially when an organization has several thousand employees. This reinforces the importance that public affairs maintain a consistent relationship/contact with dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders, which may aid in transferring information to the best internal individual or department to respond.

As public affairs is a boundary spanning function, intraorganizational stakeholders are often managers/directors of specific sub-functions of the organization. Their perspective is on their service line or department, such as cardiology, urology or clinical laboratory, etc. Public affairs noted there is sometimes a lack of a system perspective, that is, taking into consideration the organization as a whole is sometimes a problem to intraorganizational engagement. For example, the policy issue may negatively impact a specific service line or function, but positively impact the organization as a

whole in other ways. The lack of an understanding of the organization as a whole, and the public affairs function to represent the organization as a whole, sometimes creates internal barriers to working well effectively.

The public affairs decision-making process at this organization appears to be seamless. Since the function is very small (two individuals), both report directly to the health system CEO. The CEO has a history of involvement in public policy issues, therefore, has direct involvement in the public affairs decision-making process. The CEO reviews, signs and approves public affairs information products (regulatory and legislative letters) with input from nonpublic affairs stakeholders.

When a public policy issue is highly complex or significant in perceived organizational impact, then a group or committee input may be necessary to generate a response. This occurred with the passage of healthcare related legislation, such as the subsequent regulatory implementation process following the Affordable Care Act, and Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act. In these cases, meetings may take place through a more formalized process to generate a response. The CEO still serves as the final decision-maker on information products, but input is broader with more internal stakeholders. Public affairs has a more formal facilitator role in managing the flow of knowledge to an information product, rather than informal, ad-hoc interaction with a small number of stakeholders. When public affairs receives a response, feedback or input from their dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder (usually director or manager level) it is presumed that response is indicative of the department's official position, and others in the downline were consulted as needed.

Organizational documents and public records demonstrated evidence that nonpublic affairs knowledge was utilized in the formation of the external information product. Public records showed specific responses, data, and analytics aided in providing specific context to a proposed public policy. In this case, most of the public records retrieved and organizational documents provided were in response to a proposed rule (regulatory process). For example, in some public records, specific medical care diagnostic codes included clinically-related feedback generated directly from nonpublic affairs stakeholders. The public affairs professional served as a conduit through the process, and packaged the knowledge into a commentary, and delivered in response to the proposal.

The theoretical framework provided an appropriate foundation to build the study. There is strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory (theoretical framework) in the context of public affairs intraorganizational engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through reciprocation. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a reciprocal manner.

Conclusion

Case site A is an integrated healthcare delivery system headquartered in the upper Midwest. I collected primary case study data by interviewing two public affairs and

nine nonpublic affairs participants over a three day site visit. Secondary data included organizational documentation provided by participants, and archival records available in the public domain. Interviews were transcribed and provided to participants for review and accuracy. Finalized transcripts were coded using an open technique aligned with the research questions, and analyzed in support with journal entries and thematic memos.

The public affairs function of the organization is comprised of two individuals, reporting directly to the CEO. The structure provides a seamless path to the decisionmaker, and public affairs view their function as a service agency to the organization and employees (customers). Consistent public policy information flows in the form of a daily email of news articles and public policy updates from public affairs to a select group of intraorganizational stakeholders, usually at the management level. Intraorganizational engagement on public policy issues is often ad-hoc to a dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder most impacted by the policy issue with email communication being the primary form of interaction medium. Nonpublic affairs appreciate information in the email to include the full text of the policy proposal, summary, status, and highlights of salient issues. Organizational documentation provided evidence of interaction occurring, and public records demonstrate the use of nonpublic affairs knowledge in public affairs information products.

Perceived barriers to effective engagement and interaction differ between public affairs professionals and nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Nonpublic affairs stakeholders cite the lack of time in their daily work to dedicate to public policy responses and the high volume of information related to policy as the primary barriers to effective

interaction and engagement. Public affairs responded with locating the right nonpublic affairs stakeholder to aid in responding to policy issues, and the lack of timely responses as barriers to ideal engagement.

Evidence collected helps fill in the gaps in the literature and to illuminate the black box of the study's conceptual framework. However, the process orientation sought in the methodology does not appear to be linear or based on a consistent process. This makes the conceptual framework a bit more challenging to fill in a process oriented way. There is also strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory in the context of public affairs engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through reciprocation. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a reciprocal manner.

Case Study Site B Report

The purpose of this document is to provide a case study report on site B. This case site was the second of three sites as part of a collective case study. The report is intended to serve as a framework for cross-case synthesis in the final doctoral dissertation. Specifically, this report will: describe the site, outline methodology, data analysis, themes, discussion and conclusion.

Case Site Description

Aligning with the methodology in Chapter 3 for purposeful sampling, case site B is an integrated healthcare delivery system located in the upper Midwest of the United States. The healthcare delivery organization has clinical, hospital, and health insurance under a single system corporate structure. The organization has a dedicated government affairs department with four individuals; one policy and regulatory analyst, one VP of Government Relations, one state government relations representative, and one local community representative.

Research Questions

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Data Collection

Procedures

I visited case site B for a total of two business days from February 4-February 5, 2016. Interviews were scheduled with each participant (9 total) at the site with one via phone. Interviews were audio recorded, but three participants refused audio recording.

Field notes were taken during the interviews and saved electronically and two journal entries were crafted during the site visit. Following the site visit, thank you emails were delivered to all participants. Interview audio was transcribed, and privately emailed to each participant, allowing four weeks for review for member checking. For those that refused audio recording, interview notes were prepared and delivered for review.

Extensions for review time were granted upon request.

Data Sources

- Primary Source: Interview data
 - Total participants: $N = 9$
 - Phone interviews: $n = 1$
 - Public Affairs participants: $n = 5$
 - Nonpublic affairs participants: $n = 4$
 - Transcripts emailed out for checking with four weeks review: Yes
 - Responses from transcript checking: $n = 3$
 - Average interview duration: approximately 35 minutes. The maximum interview length was 60 minutes, and no interview exceeded the allotted time frame.
- Secondary Sources
 - Documents provided by organization participants and reviewed using documentation protocol: 4

- Archival/Public Records obtained by organization participants or by researcher in public domains and reviewed using public record protocol: 10
- Field notes: Yes, one generated for each interview session.
- Site Visit Journal Entries: 2

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred in tandem; however, most of the data analysis was performed during the coding process which followed the generation of transcripts and document reviews. Three thematic memos were crafted following the case site visit A and B but before coding of the transcripts. This helped establish initial codes for data analysis, which used an open coding approach, borrowed from grounded theory designs, as explained in Chapter 3.

The following describes the data analysis process for Case Site B:

1. Thematic memos crafted immediately following site visits;
2. Interview transcripts generated and coded with Atlas ti. CAQDAS from the ground up using an open approach; however, the CAQDAS allowed me to use existing codes from Case Site A as appropriate
3. Codes were placed into families aligned with each corresponding research question along with the theoretical framework;
4. Codes reviewed for volume of citations (number of times text cited with code) to determine strength and prevalence;

5. Codes with less than 3-assigned passages were re-reviewed to determine alignment or relationship with other codes (known as density in Atlas ti.);
6. Coded text/passages from each family generated into corresponding code family reports with specific citations to data, saved to case study database and reviewed for themes;
7. Seminal quotes highlighted in code family reports for specific context;
8. Additional memos crafted from the coded data to aid in thematic development, aligning with using a funnel approach to hone in on key themes for cross-case synthesis.

Code List and Families

The following is the code list and families for analyzing interview transcripts, organizational documentation, and public records for case site A:

Code Families

Code Family: Holistic Knowledge Transfer Theory

Codes (3): [Holistic Knowledge Transfer] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [PA Knowledge Transfer]

Quotation(s): 18

Code Family: How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?

Codes (6): [Administrative function] [CEO as Decisionmaker] [Committee or Group Response] [Leadership team] [NPA Director/Manager Level] [PA Decision-making]

Quotation(s): 50

Code Family: How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Codes (9): [Boilerplate language] [Email Communication] [Holistic Knowledge Transfer] [Linking Policy with Operations and Strategy] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA Internal Resources] [NPA Knowledge Transfer] [PA External Resources] [PA Knowledge Transfer]

Quotation(s): 58

Code Family: How do public affairs engage and interact with intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Codes (44): [Ad-Hoc] [Bidirectional learning] [Cognizant of NPA Role] [Collaboration] [Committee or Group Response] [Concise] [Consistent Interaction] [Dedicated NPA Stakeholder] [Draft Review] [Email Communication] [Full Text] [Informal] [Internal Communication] [Internal Relationships] [Linking Macro to Micro Level] [Linking Policy with Operations and Strategy] [Meetings] [NPA Director/Manager Level] [NPA Distribution] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA External Resources] [NPA

initiates interaction] [NPA Internal Resources] [NPA Ownership and Responsibility] [NPA Policy Interest] [NPA Policy Involvement] [NPA Start Interaction] [PA Collating Input/Knowledge] [PA Conduit] [PA Engagement Art] [PA External Resources] [PA Filter] [PA Information Flow to Internal Experts] [PA initiates interaction] [PA News and Information Updates] [PA presentations] [Phone Communication] [Political Capital] [Reciprocation] [Responsiveness] [Salient Points] [Summarize] [Two-way] [Vetting Process]

Quotation(s): 211

Code Family: How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?

Codes (7): [Administrative function] [CEO as Decisionmaker] [Leadership team] [PA Conduit] [PA Structure] [Self Advocacy] [Support PA function]

Quotation(s):43

Code Family: What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?

Codes (16): [Ambiguity] [Conflict] [Draft Review] [Finding right NPA stakeholder] [Follow-up and close the loop] [Lack of Information Availability] [Lack of Prioritization] [Lack of Resources] [Lack of Responsiveness] [Lack of Time] [Lack of Understanding Public Affairs] [Linking Macro to Micro Level] [Prioritization Issues] [Size of organization] [Timely] [Volume]

Quotation(s): 53

Memos

Building on case site A, thematic memos were composed to aid in data analysis with identifying themes. Memos crafted included the following titles and themes:

- Ad-hoc and informal intraorganizational engagement
- PA filtering
- Two-way communication and engagement
- Formality of engagement related to level of policy impact
- PA best practices
- PA structure and decision-making

Results/Themes

Themes were generated from the Atlas ti. codes/families and researcher generated memos and aligned to answer the primary research question and sub questions. In addition, Public Affairs Best Practices was added as a code family with a memo to align with the practical application of research as recommendations for public affairs practice. This section outlines the key themes for each research question. As expected, the primary research question generated the most codes and code families from the data.

Primary Research Question

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

- 1) Overarching theme: PA engagement is an Art
 - a) Not one defined process

- b) Varies on who working with
 - c) There is not a science to this you are constant state of ambiguity
 - d) Politically charged
 - e) Case-by-case basis
 - f) Don't want to crush everyone's dreams
 - g) Build and maintain internal relationships
 - i) Very important to cultivate internal relationships
 - ii) "Will support and guide them, but we are not going to lead the charge"
(PAB4)
 - iii) "It's not just one person saying this is what our position should be, you want to get everyone's opinion, and then come to a decision as to what's best for the organization." (NPAB4)
 - h) Can use varying means of political capital to satisfy internal stakeholders
 - i) Favor for a community partner
 - i) Be a self-advocate
 - i) Sell yourself and the department
- 2) Engagement and Interaction
- a) Two-way engagement and bidirectional interaction
 - i) "That reciprocal empathy is a key piece"
 - ii) "It's two ways. If I see something I'll reach out to them. You never know who's going to hear something first." (NPAB4)
 - iii) Side-by-side

- iv) Work in tandem
- v) Linking macro to micro level through empathy
 - (1) PA commences interaction
 - (a) PA Filter and Distribution
 - (i) Filters by using acumen to determine political viability/priority of proposed policy
 - (ii) “certain guardrails”
 - (iii) Build internal relationships, understand won’t ask unless important
 - (iv) Vetting process that leads to some level of standardization
 - 1. Is it impactful enough?
 - (b) Conciseness
 - (i) Distribute information
 - (ii) Comprehensive overview
 - (iii) Short remarks
 - (c) Cognizant of NPA time toward organizational role
 - (i) “And the part we already talked about fully understanding that this isn’t people’s full time jobs”
 - (ii) Other responsibilities
 - (2) PA acts as a conduit
 - (a) Facilitates opinions/thoughts
 - (i) Pull together multiple content experts

(ii) “Without being able to pull together multiple content experts, I would never have probably gotten to the level of clarity around that issue in time prior to the passage of that bill” (PAB1)

(b) Take insights together and report to PA

vi) NPA initiates interaction

(1) Does happen

(a) Important for PA to bring their perspective and contrary

(2) PA asks if vetted with senior leader

(3) Involvement in external board or association

(4) Other internal stakeholders

(a) Issue identification

(5) PA becomes reliant on content experts to bring issues to attention

b) Ad-hoc

i) As issues come up/depending on issue at hand

ii) What are thoughts? Any comments

iii) “Some bills will, they affect administration and management policies and then you really have to kind of match the content expert with where the impact lies.” (PAB4)

c) Informal

i) Can be indirect

ii) Ask thoughts

- iii) Totally informal
- d) Consistent interaction
 - i) Policy/Political news updates
 - (1) Weekly distribution to management level and those interested
 - (2) List is 200+
 - (3) Grown
 - (4) Very helpful!
 - ii) Presentations to groups
 - iii) Committee or Group Response (team-based)
 - iv) Regular interaction with those that are consistently impacted
 - (1) Standing committees
 - (a) Structure and guidance
 - (b) Used to obtain knowledge
 - (c) Bi-weekly, monthly, etc.
 - (d) Leadership engagement
 - (i) “One entity or one department can’t be the one accountable place for reviewing and determining whether an issue as important so all of these leaders are bringing their lists based on their review of trade Association updates, the Federal Register whatever way that they’re getting their information and we’re connecting dots.” (PAB1)
 - (2) Bigger it (policy is), the more structure

- (3) Collaboration
- (4) Intraorganizational Relationship purposes
 - (a) Annual proposed rule
 - (b) Monthly or bi-monthly meetings or conference calls
 - (c) Provide notification and status updates on policy issues (keep in loop)
- e) Dedicated NPA stakeholder
 - i) Identified point person is critical to public affairs
 - (1) Downline for content expertise
 - (2) Good to be someone in the organization for several years
 - (3) May be individual as secondary contact on information products
 - ii) May be an individual at c-suite level or director level
 - iii) Known responsibilities with policy
 - (1) Embedded into organizational thought
 - (2) Importance of understanding stake
 - iv) Awareness of policy issues
 - (1) Involvement in external groups/associations
 - (2) Public policy interest
 - (a) Enjoy policy issues
 - (b) Competitive mindset
 - (c) Likes history, government affairs, and public policy
 - (d) Mostly management level

- (e) Critical mass; but some leaders may not understand policy implications
 - (f) Connected to associations/external groups
 - v) PA trust/relies on the diffusion/outreach to downline subject matter experts
 - (1) Important that NPA finds the right person for PA
 - (2) Pull teams together as needed
 - vi) NPA ownership and responsibility
 - (1) Certain consistent policy issues are owned or responsible by an NPA stakeholder
 - (2) May consult with external resources to help answer questions
- 3) Political Capital
 - a) CEO understands it
 - b) Can use varying means of political capital to satisfy internal stakeholders
 - c) Important for leadership to understand how it's used
 - d) Sometimes downline subject matter experts don't understand political capital
- 4) Communication
 - a) Email
 - i) Is strongest form of communication by far
 - b) Phone
 - i) Unscheduled and scheduled

- ii) Conference calls
- c) Meetings
 - i) Used for more impactful issues
 - ii) Tool for departments that interact with the most (finance, operations, quality)
 - iii) Good to get faces in the room
 - iv) Perceived as most effective way of communicating
 - (1) Good for internal relationships?
- d) PA Best Practice
 - i) Raw information, include full bill or proposal (full text)
 - ii) Summary or synthesis
 - iii) Highlight the salient points
 - iv) News article on the policy issue
 - v) Allow opportunity to review information product before public delivery
 - vi) Policy news and information updates
 - (1) Consistent/daily
 - vii) Boilerplate language in information products
 - (1) Describe proposed policy in rule, then respond
 - (2) Bold key position
 - viii) Keep leadership apprised
 - ix) Take time to understand operational impact

(1) “the importance of linking changes operationally and work with government affairs strategically to communicate impacts continues to drive interaction”

e) NPA Best Practices

- i) Snippets of knowledge
- ii) Analytical products to public affairs
- iii) Timely responsiveness (24-48 hours) to public affairs inquiries

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
 - a. Chief Executive Officer (PAB1, PAB4, PAB6, Bdoc1)
 - i. Executive Leadership Team (20 people)
 1. Chief Administrative officer (Administrative function)
 - a. Corporate Affairs Department- legal, compliance, operations, government and community relations
 - i. Senior Vice President of Government Affairs- all public policy is piped through this individual (or copied)
 1. Directors
 - a. Specialists/Managers
2. Chief Communications Officer
 - a. Public Affairs Director

2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
 - a. NPA perspective
 - i. Ambiguity
 1. “sometimes proposed policy is very conceptual, which makes it difficult to quantify” (NPAB7)
 2. Not enough information
 - ii. Lack of time
 - iii. Volume/length of information relevant to policy
 - iv. Lack of prioritization
 - v. Lack of closing the loop
 1. Circle back, close the loop
 - vi. Lack of resources
 - b. PA perspective
 - i. Finding right NPA stakeholder
 1. So at times, it can be hard to know who ought to know on their team.
 2. “Knowing NPAs that serve on external committees affecting policymaking would be helpful”
 3. “Sometimes it is ambiguous on where to go for input; is it a single person or a dozen?” (PAB2)

4. "I think that that same a lot of time in trying to find sometimes the right person and ensure that you're covering all of your bases" (PAB4)
 - ii. Conflict of opinion/internal disagreement
 - iii. Timely response
 - iv. NPA policy engagement
 1. "Sometimes employees have conversations on policies with a legislator without knowledge of government affairs" (PAB2)
 - v. Lack of prioritization of public policy issues
 1. Most are day to day operations
 - vi. Lack of system or organization perspective
 - vii. Lack of understanding nuances of government affairs
 1. "I honestly believe more of our leaders than most probably don't understand the entire policymaking process and all the working components behind it" (NPAB2)
 - viii. Lack of resources
 - ix. Linking macro to micro level issues
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
 - a. Executive Leadership team provides most of the final sign-off and decision-making

- i. Designated decisionmaker from areas most impacted by the policy proposal
 - 1. Routed to input from downlines most impacted
 - a. Management
 - i. All at director or manager levels
 - 2. C-suite not always final decisionmaker
- b. Group or committee response
 - i. “we work in tandem with our experts on the front lines to ensure that they fully understand the issue at hand, so that they can make educated decisions on the recommendation” (PAB1)
 - ii. “Shouldn’t define the position of the organization from that level of expertise” (PAB1)
 - iii. The bigger the more structure
 - iv. Seems to have several standing committees
 - 1. External Affairs Group
 - a. Social responsibility
 - b. Foundation
 - c. Community Relations
 - d. Government Affairs
 - 2. Open communication
- c. Critical for public affairs to have a direct, efficient pipeline to decision makers

4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?
 - a. External Information Products
 - i. Regulatory comments
 - ii. Meetings
 1. Take time to understand operational impact
 - iii. Media interviews
 - iv. Position letters
 - v. Testimony
 - b. NPA Knowledge transfer
 - i. Use of internal resources to transfer knowledge
 - ii. Use of external resources to transfer knowledge
 1. Data analysis
 2. Impact analyses
 3. Reports
 4. Informal feedback/snippets
 5. Meetings
 6. Projects
 7. Collaboration
5. Theoretical framework: Holistic knowledge transfer
 - a. Strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory
 - i. Bidirectional learning

- ii. Two-way communication
- iii. PA-NPA Engagement reciprocation
- iv. PA knowledge
 - 1. Political acumen
 - 2. External relationships
 - 3. Policy analysis
 - a. presentations
- v. NPA knowledge
 - 1. Detailed analytics
 - 2. Operational issues
 - 3. Clinical implications

Discussion

The primary purpose of this case study was investigate the engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals in healthcare delivery organizations. The subquestions helped provide boundaries to ensure responses were honed in to the core study's purpose.

Public affairs, known as government affairs in this organization, is comprised of five individuals. One Senior Vice President serves as the manager, part of the Corporate Affairs Department with directors of community relations, government affairs, and policy specialists. The Corporate Affairs department reports to the Chief Administrative Officer. It is also noted that this organization has a designated public affairs AND government affairs function. This supports the literature that there is differing nomenclature in

assigning titles to public affairs, which can often overlap with external affairs, government affairs, and government relations. It appeared that the public affairs representative (interviewed) took on more of a public relations function, by noting their work with the general public on a variety of matters rather than exclusively targeted work with public policy.

Public affairs continues to be an art in executing the work. There appears to be no formula for public affairs and specifically related to intraorganizational engagement. This may contribute to the lack of an overarching theory of public affairs in the literature. The organization has several standing committees that provide guidance and knowledge to public affairs, but no governance committee exists other than the Executive Leadership Team.

Most of the intraorganizational engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders is ad-hoc. In other words, public affairs and nonpublic affairs only interact and engage as needed, or when necessary to address or respond to a public policy issue. Evidence suggests the initiator of the engagement can be either public affairs or nonpublic affairs, but appears to be tilted more towards public affairs commencing the communication on policy issues. The primary form of communication is strongly noted by email, supported by telephone interaction, and in-person or virtual meetings. Meetings were noted, however, as a preferred method of communication and interaction.

Although most of the interaction is on an as-needed basis, some intraorganizational engagement is consistent. Consistent engagement is executed by

scheduled periodic meetings or check-ins between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders, or as part of an intraorganizational advisory committee. An External Affairs Committee was established between community relations, foundation, social, and government affairs. In addition, other standing committees exist to check-in, especially with those groups government affairs tend to work with most.

Prior to any engagement from public affairs, the first step is to filter the policy issue. Public affairs uses their political acumen to determine the relevance of the policy proposal and viability of a proposal prior to engaging with nonpublic affairs stakeholders. This is done due the importance of not overburdening nonpublic affairs professionals on matters of unimportance or minimal likelihood of gaining political traction or unrelated to health policy. Having cognizance of the roles of nonpublic affairs stakeholders appear to be a consistent practice amongst public affairs participants.

If the policy issue is determined to merit intraorganizational engagement by public affairs, the efficient identification of a department or nonpublic affairs stakeholder, or point person, is critical to effective engagement. Typically this is the department or service line leader (chief, executive director, or Vice President). This begins the “art of engagement that may be individually designed and driven. Internal relationships are critical to success in this function. This primary contact, almost always serving in an administrative function of the organization at the manager or director level, serves as the lead of the department or portion of the organization impacted or most relevant to responding to the policy matter inquiry. Public affairs participants presumed that if the issue or question(s) delivered to the dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder cannot be

addressed by that specific individual, it is the responsibility of the nonpublic affairs stakeholder to transfer the inquiry to others within their department/function/downline to respond.

To facilitate effective information sharing and communication via email, public affairs should communicate clearly and concisely. In the email, public affairs should include an attachment or link to the full text of the proposal(s), brief summary of salient points, status, and links to any relevant news article or sources. Prefatory remarks are appreciated. This assures the communication product has sufficient resources and information to aid the response from the nonpublic affairs stakeholder being asked to provide input. Most often in responding, nonpublic affairs stakeholders provide brief comments or snippets of knowledge back to public affairs to be integrated into an external information product. Sometimes nonpublic affairs stakeholder provide detailed commentary, analyses, or reports. Rarely do nonpublic affairs provide a formal report or analytical memo in response to public policy proposals, highlighting the predominance of informal, ad-hoc interaction.

There are numerous perceived barriers to effective intraorganizational engagement. The primary barriers from the perspective of the nonpublic affairs stakeholder are the ambiguity of policy itself, lack of resources, lack of time, and the high volume of information relevant to public policy. The first barrier was presented in that public policy is often proposed as concepts, with many variables that make analytics difficult to perform. Second, as the organization grows, resources are becoming more difficult to keep up with the work. Third, nonpublic affairs stakeholders noted the lack of

time in responding to policy matters, highlighting the importance of public affairs to be very cognizant of time and ensure the request is a priority. The other barrier is the volume of information on policy matters. Legislation and proposed administrative rules can be hundreds of pages in length, requiring several hours spent on analyzing the raw information for the important provisions related to the specific nonpublic affairs function. This reinforces the importance for public affairs to provide a summary and highlight the salient points of a proposed policy.

From the public affairs perspective, primary barriers are lack of timely response to inquiries, finding the right stakeholder, and challenges with general understanding the function of public affairs. In many instances, public affairs sends an inquiry (after filtering) to a nonpublic affairs stakeholder seeking a response, often with a quick turnaround such as responding to a reporter on a publication or policymaker inquiry, or public testimony before a committee. Not receiving a timely response makes it very challenging for public affairs to maintain external relationships and be responsive. However, most participants acknowledged that responsiveness was generally adequate, as the lack of timely responsiveness impacts the quality and context of an external information product, and may miss opportunities for policy engagement. Next, if a public affairs professional does not know where to send a proposed public policy item, it can be a challenge to track down the best stakeholder, especially when an organization has several thousand employees. This was reiterated from public affairs participants, and reinforces the importance that public affairs maintain a consistent relationship/contact with dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders, which may aid in transferring information

to the best internal individual or department to respond. It appears that the primary starting point in the organization is the executive leadership team, providing the top of the pyramid contact to downline employees that serve as the content experts.

The public affairs decision-making process at this organization appears to be consistent, but complex. In reviewing public records, the signer was not the same individual that spoke on behalf of the organization. In this organization, the decision maker was the senior leader overseeing the service line/department most impacted by the proposed policy. However, the title of the individual encompassed chief, senior vice President, vice president or executive director. This suggests that decision-making flows may not be linear, and may depend on a specific leaders preference for final decision, or preference on whether to actually sign a public affairs information product. Nonetheless, improvement could be done as to whether the signer is always a Chief, member of the executive leadership team, or the content expert. In most information products reviewed, the content expert was listed as a secondary contact nearing the end of the information product.

Knowledge transfer occurs frequently in public affairs, but can come from many forms. Instead of the predominant ad-hoc, informal nature of responding to policy, when a public policy issue is highly complex or significant in perceived organizational impact, then a group or committee input may be necessary to generate a response. The organization has many standing committees used to address different matters to the organization. In these cases, meetings may take place through a more formalized process to generate a response. The designated leader of the service line still serves as the final

decisionmaker on information products, but input is broader with more internal stakeholders. Public affairs has a more formal facilitator role in managing the flow of knowledge to an information product, and addressing conflict, rather than informal, ad-hoc interaction with a small number of stakeholders.

Organizational documents and public records demonstrated evidence that nonpublic affairs knowledge was utilized in the formation of the external information product. Public records showed specific responses, data, and analytics aided in providing specific context to a proposed public policy. In this case, most of the public records retrieved and organizational documents provided were in response to a proposed rule (regulatory process). For example, in some public records, specific medical care diagnostic codes included clinically-related feedback generated directly from nonpublic affairs stakeholders. The public affairs professional served as a conduit through the process, and packaged the knowledge into a commentary, and delivered in response to the proposal.

The theoretical framework provided an appropriate foundation to build the study. There is strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory (theoretical framework) in the context of public affairs intraorganizational engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through reciprocation. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a

reciprocal manner. Public affairs provides political acumen, external relationships management, and policy analytics while the nonpublic affairs stakeholder provides content expertise, operational knowledge, and clinical implications to public affairs.

Conclusion

Case site B is an integrated healthcare delivery system headquartered in the upper Midwest. I collected primary case study data by interviewing five public affairs and four nonpublic affairs participants over a two day site visit. Secondary data included organizational documentation provided by participants, and archival records available in the public domain. Interviews were transcribed and provided to participants for review and accuracy. Finalized transcripts were coded using an open technique aligned with the research questions, and analyzed in support with journal entries and thematic memos. To maintain some continuity with case site A, codes aligned with text in site B were used to provide a seamless transition. However, the primary aspect to coding still adhered to an open approach, as several new and different codes emerged.

The public affairs function of the organization has a designated senior vice-president, part of the executive leadership team, and part of the Corporate Affairs Department reporting to the Chief Administrative Officer. The structure is hierarchical. Consistent public policy information flows in the form of a weekly email of news articles and public policy updates from public affairs to a select group of intraorganizational stakeholders, usually at the management level and those that express individual interest. Intraorganizational engagement on public policy issues is often ad-hoc to a dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder most impacted by the policy issue with email

communication being the primary form of interaction medium. Nonpublic affairs appreciate information in the email to include the full text of the policy proposal, summary, status, and highlights of salient issues. Organizational documentation provided evidence of interaction occurring, and public records demonstrate the use of nonpublic affairs knowledge in public affairs information products.

Perceived barriers to effective engagement and interaction differ between public affairs professionals and nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Nonpublic affairs stakeholders cite the lack of time in their daily work to dedicate to public policy responses, the ambiguity that public policy presents, and the high volume of information related to policy as the primary barriers to effective interaction and engagement. Public affairs responded with tracking the right nonpublic affairs stakeholder to aid in responding to policy issues, the lack of timely responses, and lack of understanding public affairs functions as barriers to ideal engagement.

Evidence collected helps fill in the gaps in the literature and to illuminate the black box of the study's conceptual framework. However, the process orientation sought in the methodology does not appear to be linear or based on a consistent process. Having different decision makers on different issues suggests the process is largely dependent on the issue and who the issue is routed to in a nonpublic affairs function. This dynamic makes the conceptual framework a bit more challenging to fill in a process oriented way, despite the study designed through a process-based lens.

There is also strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory in the context of public affairs engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often

bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through reciprocity. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. The knowledge of public affairs and nonpublic affairs are very different, and need to be transferred effectively for use in information products. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a reciprocal manner.

Case Study Site C Report

The purpose of this document is to provide a case study report on site C. This case site was the final of three sites as part of a collective case study. The report is intended as a framework for cross-case synthesis in the final doctoral dissertation. Specifically, this report will: describe the site, outline methodology, data analysis, themes, discussion and conclusion.

Case Site Description

Aligning with the methodology in Chapter 3 for purposeful sampling, case site C is an integrated healthcare delivery system located in the upper Midwest of the United States. The healthcare delivery organization has clinical, hospital, and health insurance under a single system corporate structure. The organization has a dedicated public affairs department with six individuals; one VP of Government and Community Relations, one director of government relations, two government relations managers, and two policy specialists.

Research Questions

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Subquestions

1. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?
2. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
3. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
4. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Data Collection

Procedures

I visited case site C for a total of two business days from August 4-August 5, 2016. Interviews were scheduled with each participant (8 total) at the site with one via phone. Interviews were audio recorded, but three participants declined audio recording. Field notes were taken during the interviews and saved electronically and two journal entries were crafted during the site visit. Following the site visit, thank you emails were delivered to all participants. Interview audio was transcribed by me, and privately emailed to each participant, allowing four weeks for review for accuracy. For those that refused audio recording, interview notes were prepared and delivered for review. Extensions for review time were granted upon request.

Data Sources

- Primary Source: Interview data

- Total participants: $N = 8$
- In-person interview: $n = 7$
- Phone interviews: $n = 1$
- Public Affairs participants: $n = 4$
- Nonpublic affairs participants: $n = 4$
- Male Participants: $n = 4$
 - Male Public Affairs Participants: $n = 1$
 - Male Nonpublic affairs participants: $n = 3$
- Female Participants: $n = 4$
 - Female Public Affairs Participants: $n = 3$
 - Female Nonpublic affairs participants: $n = 1$
- Transcripts or interview notes emailed out for checking with four weeks review: Yes
- Responses from transcript checking: 6
- Average interview duration: approximately 35 minutes. The maximum interview length was 45 minutes.
- Secondary Sources
 - Documents provided by organization participants and reviewed using documentation protocol: 4
 - Archival/Public Records obtained by organization participants or by researcher in public domains and reviewed using public record protocol: 7

- Field notes: Yes, one generated for each interview session.
- Site Visit Journal Entries: 2
- Data were added to existing memos based on themes

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred in tandem; however, most of the data analysis was performed during the coding process which followed the generation of transcripts and document reviews. Three thematic memos were crafted following the case site visit A and B but before coding of the transcripts. This helped establish initial codes for data analysis, which used an open coding approach, borrowed from grounded theory designs, as explained in Chapter 3. Additional context was added to the thematic memos following site visit C as a means of commencing cross-case synthesis.

The following describes the data analysis process for Case Site C:

1. Context added to existing thematic memos based on site visit;
2. Interview transcripts generated and coded with Atlas ti. CAQDAS from the ground up using an open approach; however, the CAQDAS allowed me to use existing codes from Case Site A and B as appropriate. New codes were also used.
3. Codes were placed into families aligned with each corresponding research question;
4. Codes reviewed for volume of citations (number of times text cited with code) to determine strength and prevalence;
5. Codes with less than 3-assigned passages were re-reviewed to determine alignment or relationship with other codes (known as density in Atlas ti.);

6. Coded text/passages from each family generated into corresponding code family reports with specific citations to data, saved to case study database and reviewed for themes;
7. Seminal quotes highlighted in code family reports for specific context;
8. Additional data were added to existing memos, providing the beginning point for cross-case synthesis.

Code List and Families

The following is the code list and families for analyzing interview transcripts, organizational documentation, and public records for case site A:

Code Families

Code Family: Holistic Knowledge Transfer Theory

Codes (3): [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA Knowledge Transfer]
[PA Knowledge Transfer]

Quotation(s):26

Code Family: How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?

Codes (5): [Administrative function] [CEO as Decisionmaker] [Committee or Group Response] [Decision-making] [NPA Director or Manager Level]

Quotation(s):31

Code Family: How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?

Codes (5): [Dedicated NPA Stakeholder] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA External Resources] [NPA Knowledge Transfer] [PA Knowledge Transfer]

Quotation(s):36

Code Family: How do public affairs engage and interact with intraorganizational stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

Codes (37): [Ad-hoc] [Collaboration] [Committee or Group Response] [Consistent Interaction] [Consistent Policy Issues] [Consistent Process] [Cover Letter] [Dedicated NPA Stakeholder] [Email Communication] [Full Bill or Proposal] [Guiding Questions] [Individualize] [Informal] [Knowledge Storing] [Meetings] [News & Information Updates] [Non-Leadership Interaction] [NPA Director or Manager Level] [NPA Expertise Linked to Public Policy] [NPA Facilitation] [NPA Filter and Distribution] [NPA Knowledge Transfer] [NPA Start Interaction] [PA Best Practices] [PA Collating Input/Knowledge] [PA Conduit] [PA Filter] [PA Information Flow] [PA Information Flows to Internal Experts] [PA initiates interaction] [PA Knowledge Transfer] [Periodic Meetings or Check-ins] [Phone Communication] [Saliency] [Summarize] [Table of Contents] [Tracking]

Quotation(s):145

Code Family: How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?

Codes (3): [Committee or Group Response] [PA Structure] [Senior Leadership]

Quotation(s): 20

Code Family: What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?

Codes (16): [Ambiguity] [Conflict] [Draft Review] [Finding right NPA stakeholder] [Follow-up and close the loop] [Lack of Information Availability] [Lack of Prioritization] [Lack of Resources] [Lack of Responsiveness] [Lack of Time] [Lack of Understanding Public Affairs] [Linking Macro to Micro Level] [Prioritization Issues] [Size of organization] [Timely] [Volume]

Quotation(s): 53

Memos

Building on case sites A, and B, thematic memos were composed to aid in data analysis with identifying themes. Memos crafted include the following titles and themes:

- Ad-hoc and informal intraorganizational engagement
- PA filtering
- Two-way communication and engagement
- Formality of engagement related to level of policy impact
- PA best practices

- PA structure and decision making

Results/Themes

Themes are generated from the Atlas ti. codes/families and researcher generated memos and aligned to answer the primary research question and sub questions. This section outlines the key themes for each research question. The primary research question generated the most codes and code families from the data.

Primary Research Question

How do public affairs engage and interact with internal organizational (nonpublic affairs) stakeholders in developing information strategies to provide to policymakers?

- 1) Engagement and Interaction
 - i) Informal
 - ii) Primarily at manager or director level
 - iii) Important to be tightly connected
- b) Ad-hoc (5)
 - i) “It is almost completely ad-hoc” (NPAC2)
 - ii) “Essence of the role in the company is to act as a resource as-needed”
(NPAC2)
 - iii) It is more as-needed
- c) Consistent interaction/Committees
 - i) Strategy and Planning Group
 - (1) Comprised of leadership
 - ii) Poly-Wog

- (1) Cross-functional group that meets bi-weekly
- (2) Share knowledge and updates
- iii) Periodic check-ins with organizational areas that provide consistent input or updates
- iv) Policy Review Committees
 - (1) Proposed rules
- v) Central Committee
 - (1) Suggest as area of improvement
- vi) Policy Updates
 - (1) Periodic, usually during legislative sessions
 - (2) Not used to gather feedback, but as an update on important issues
- 2) Communication Method
 - a) Email
 - i) Is strongest form of communication by far
 - (1) Can be overwhelming at times
 - ii) Preferred method when asked to respond on policy issues
 - (1) Good for storing and capturing when needed
 - (2) PAC1: “Kind of more target, because kind of sense of lots of times when you send a mass email, less feeling it’s something you need to reply to, but if I you send something to an individual or specifically ask, that seems to be an easier way, or more direct way to gather input.”

- b) Phone
 - i) Unscheduled and scheduled
 - ii) Conference calls
 - c) Meetings
 - i) Be able to walk through things
 - ii) Meeting face to face makes a big difference
 - iii) PAC1: “Sometimes you are trying to coordinate a huge group of people, and there is sometimes a little bit like you are trying to figure what everyone’s role is in it. I found in terms of feedback, there’s definitely some people that want to type a lot of it through email but a lot of people it is easier if you get an initial meeting.”
- 3) Initial interaction
- a) Can be either PA or NPA
 - i) Initial request sometimes, but not often, originates from NPA
 - (1) Sign-on letters, for example
 - (2) Encourage individual to be involved as an individual
 - (3) PAC2: “Sometimes non-government relations stakeholders will send information on a proposed bill or policy piece to government relations and ask to engage. Using a similar filtering process, if the bill doesn’t fit with priorities or has a small likelihood of passing, then government relations may track the bill and communicate to the individual(s) that they will keep them updated if the bill moves.”

b) Consistent Process

i) Filter and Distribution

- (1) “Distribution of relevant and meaningful information is critical, and a value-laden service government relations provides internally to the organization.” (PAC2)
- (2) The importance of filtering and distilling public policy information cannot be underscored
- (3) PAC1: “So were looking at federal laws, federal rules, federal register seeing what comes up through associations, state registers, and state bills. It is a lot to go through. In doing that, we can’t send out everything, and there is also a balance with things that we send out if we are going to provide meaningful context on that, we can’t do that for every bill.”
- (4) PAC1: “go through and we decide which ones need to be sent out. Sometimes send out at different levels, so some will just be an FYI, some we want feedback on, so those are kind of the two categories we put them in”
- (5) PAC2: “Simply forwarding a 300 page bill would likely not generate a good response. This filtering process is methodically vetted with the government relations team.”

ii) Methodical

- (1) Formats each email in a similar fashion for legislation/rulemaking

- (2) Includes:
 - (a) bill/rule full text or link
 - (b) summary with top 7-8 salient points
 - (c) table of contents, and ask to respond by reply all on feedback
 - (d) Sometimes use guided questions for specific recipients
 - (e) Target the recipient as necessary; individualize
 - (f) In essence, user-friendly
- (3) Recipients (internal stakeholders) are based on an internal list of leaders, managers, and content experts
 - (a) PAC1: “For any given bill, we send to the subject matter experts on the list, which are typically at the leadership/management level, unless there is some mid-level specialist that possess the best knowledge to receive the proposal.”
 - (b) “When asked by government relations to respond to a policy or rule, the request becomes the highest priority task.” (NPAC1)
 - (c) Sometimes have to seek the right individual(s) as point persons
 - (d) PAC2: “Overall, there is a very respectful dynamic between senior leaders and downline content experts that helps ensure the knowledge/expertise is reflective of the department.”
 - (e) Memo asks to forward to others who think should see the memo, and to follow-up with any questions
- (4) Feedback received

- (a) Intraorganizational expertise and feedback are very important to the function of government relations.
- (b) Generally very informal
 - (i) Teaching
- (c) NPAC4: “I will facilitate getting feedback from the operational folks to the government relations department.”
 - (i) Sometimes NPA Leaders refer to their downline for PA
 - (ii) “Responsibility of the manager/leader of a department that helps facilitate the flow of government relations requests to the right subject-matter expert when they aren’t the best source.”
(PAC3)
- (d) Based on consensus
- (e) PAC2: “There is significant value in the role non-government affairs stakeholders play and contribute to understanding public policy issues.”
- (f) Bullet points, snippets
 - (i) Unique voice to add: NPAC2: “Then it becomes a question as to what unique voice would we add to the debate? There have been a limited number of times where my expertise made a unique point made that it has made a difference in regulators actions (or inactions).”

(ii) NPAC4: “I generally provide a summary, bullet points, or a few paragraphs in relation to the section being asked to respond on.”

(g) Reflected on comment letters

(i) PAC1: “I know lots of times I feel like kind of the easiest way to move it forward is that I put together a draft, even if it is terrible I send to them. Even if it’s things such as “I don’t know if this is what we mean, I don’t if this is right” because it’s just much easier for people to take something and be like “no, that’s not what I said, I want to do this instead.”

(5) Knowledge storage

(a) Placed in tracking grid managed by government relations

(b) The tracker includes, author, bill number, companion number, status, and all internal comments.

(c) “If a bill comes up for hearing, all information is there to develop a position, talking points, draft testimony, decision-making on engagement/advocacy strategies.” (PAC3)

c) PA Best Practice

i) Raw information, include full bill or proposal (full text)

ii) Summary or synthesis

iii) Highlight the salient points

iv) Policy news and information updates

(1) Consistent/daily

v) Boilerplate language in information products

(1) Describe proposed policy in rule, then respond

(2) Bold key position

vi) Keep leadership appraised

vii) Take time to understand operational impact

(1) “the importance of linking changes operationally and work with government affairs strategically to communicate impacts continues to drive interaction”

Subquestions

6. How is public affairs structured in healthcare delivery organizations?

a. Perceived effectiveness

i. “for our organization, it works well.” PAC3

ii. “Based on prior experience with other companies, the current structure is very ideal to an effective government relations function” (PAC2)

b. Senior VP of Government Affairs and Community Relations

i. Director

1. Care Delivery

a. Government Relations Manager (external)

b. Policy Specialist (internal)

2. Health Plan

- a. Senior Policy Manager (internal)
 - b. Policy Specialist (external)
7. What are perceived barriers to intraorganizational structures, processes, and practices for information strategies?
- a. NPA perspective
 - i. Ambiguous and conceptual
 - 1. “sometimes proposed policy is very conceptual, which makes it difficult to quantify” (NPAB7)
 - 2. Not enough information
 - ii. Complexity
 - 1. NPAC3: “Sometimes reading policy is reading a different language.”
 - 2. Impact multiple parts of the organization
 - iii. Lack of time
 - 1. NPAC4: “Clearly the time it takes to do that work.”
 - iv. Lack of bandwidth
 - 1. PAC1: “I would definitely say people’s ability to take on government relations work in addition to their normal duties.”
 - v. Busy
 - vi. Follow-up with final outcome
 - 1. Circle back, close the loop

vii. Inconsistency

1. NPAC3: “You can try to block time on your calendar, but it seems like it comes in fits and starts. It can come in bunches, then be quiet for awhile. That is really a challenge.”

viii. Redundancy

ix. Volume of emails

1. “it is a bit overwhelming” NPAC3
2. Too many emails

b. PA perspective

i. Finding right NPA stakeholder

1. PAC1: “I feel like one of the more challenging things when I started was who should I send things to.”
2. How big should the NPA list be
3. PAC2: “At times, there are challenges on who should know and be consulted on public policy matters. Should a proposal go to three stakeholders or a dozen? This is sometimes ambiguous.
4. Internal memo does ask recipients to forward to others that should know about the bill

ii. Conflict of opinion/internal disagreement

1. NPAC4: “One person said “hey I want to go back to this topic, because I don’t agree.” I said, “we need to talk to the other person.”
 - iii. Timely response
 - iv. Need to be cognizant of their roles and time that it takes away from their jobs
 - v. Lack of Responsiveness
 - vi. Lack of public policy acumen
 - vii. Differences in work priorities
 - viii. Lack of resources
 - ix. Too many email recipients
 - x. Volume of emails
 1. PAC4: “Second, the current system errs on the side of sending out information rather than strong filtering.”
8. How are intraorganizational decisions made regarding information strategies?
- a. Issue-dependent
 - i. PAC1: “The review process for things that we are going to send out officially that we have a position on is varied.”
 - ii. Different organizational members signed information products
 1. Public affairs and nonpublic affairs
 2. Generally a group of leaders
 3. Go to leaders in a disorganized way

4. PAC1: “Because he was the person who is involved with a lot of associations, so in that case we would have that type of person sign with specialized knowledge that we thought it would be more appropriate to have a leader in that area.”
 - iii. Strategy and Planning Committee
 1. decides on critical, controversial issues
 2. The Strategy and Planning group really sets the direction and institutional positions on policy matters.
 - iv. Establishing a formal committee to respond to policy issues depends on size and scope of the issue
9. How are intraorganizational nonpublic affairs knowledge utilized in organizational information strategies?
 - a. External Information Products
 - i. Regulatory comment letters
 - ii. NPA occasionally sign for external information products
10. Theoretical framework: Holistic knowledge transfer
 - a. Strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory
 - i. Bidirectional learning
 - ii. Two-way communication
 - iii. PA-NPA Engagement reciprocation
 - iv. PA knowledge

1. Political acumen
 2. External relationships
 3. Policy analysis
 - a. presentations
- v. NPA knowledge
1. Detailed analytics
 2. Operational issues
 3. Clinical implications

Discussion

The primary purpose of this case study was investigate the engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs professionals in healthcare delivery organizations. The subquestions helped provide boundaries to ensure responses were honed in to the core study's purpose.

Public Affairs Structure

Public affairs, known as government relations in this organization, is comprised of six individuals. One Senior Vice President (SVP) of Government and Community Relations serves as the senior leader. Under the SP, the Director of Government Relations oversees two branches: Health Plan and Care Delivery, each with a policy manager and a policy specialist with an internal/external focus. This is the only case study site that designated government relations as either internal or external facing. A Strategy and Planning Committee serves as the primary executive level leadership entity facilitating decisions on difficult public policy issues. Participants agreed the overall structure seems

to be a good fit. This supports the evidence of the literature that there is no right way to structure public affairs.

Engagement and Interaction

Public affairs continues to be an art in executing the work. There appears to be no formula for public affairs and specifically related to intraorganizational engagement, but this site offers the most methodical process for obtaining internal stakeholder input. The organization has some committees that provide guidance and knowledge to public affairs, but no oversight committee exists other than Strategy and Planning for use in important decision-making.

Most of the intraorganizational engagement and interaction between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders is ad-hoc. In other words, public affairs and nonpublic affairs only interact and engage as needed, or when necessary to address or respond to a public policy issue. Evidence suggests the initiator of the engagement can be either public affairs or nonpublic affairs, but appears to be heavily oriented towards public affairs commencing the communication on policy issues. The primary form of communication is strongly noted by email, supported by telephone interaction, and in-person meetings. Meetings were noted, however, as a preferred method of communication and interaction.

Although most of the interaction is on an as-needed basis, some intraorganizational engagement is consistent. Consistent engagement is executed by scheduled periodic meetings or check-ins between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders. There appears to be no Government Relations Committee—in fact, this was an area suggested as an opportunity to centralize the function a little more. But given the

dynamics from other case sites, this may not be the best solution to intraorganizational engagement.

Prior to any engagement from public affairs, the first step is to filter the policy issue. However, it was identified that the organization relies heavily on information distribution that could be pared down. Public affairs utilizes their political acumen to determine the relevance of the policy proposal and viability of a proposal prior to engaging with nonpublic affairs stakeholders. But state-level policy generally includes everything, suggesting a divergence from case sites A and B that tended to do more filtering.

The process continues by emailing out information on the bill. The recipients asked to provide input are captured in a database, saved by public affairs. Recipients typically include directors and manager-level employees. The initial email is fairly consistent, includes the bill or proposed rule text (or link), brief summary of key points, table of contents, and instructions for response. However, sometimes responses need to be individually designed and driven, such as using guiding questions or prefatory remarks. Internal relationships are critical to success in this function. This primary contacts, serves as the lead of the department or portion of the organization impacted or most relevant to responding to the policy matter inquiry. Public affairs participants ask the contacts to forward the email to others in their downline that should be consulted, this is considered their responsibility.

Once the transfer of public affairs information is initiated, the feedback process begins. Nonpublic affairs are asked to provide their knowledge in reciprocation to the

request, which is critical public affairs structure the initial request in a way that is user friendly. For some nonpublic affairs stakeholders, they consider responding to the email request to be their top priority task. Most often in responding, nonpublic affairs stakeholders provide brief comments, a few paragraphs, or snippets of knowledge back to public affairs to be integrated into an external information product. Sometimes, but rarely do nonpublic affairs stakeholder provide detailed commentary, analyses, or reports highlighting the predominance of informal, ad-hoc interaction.

As part of this process, nonpublic affairs stakeholders are asked to respond via reply all. This is done to continue the chain of communication, and public affairs saves the feedback in a tracking grid that is further utilized in information products when the need to respond is presented. Text from the responses are gathered by the initial person sending out the request, and saved to a tracking document. The tracking document is used to retrieve input as a method of storing knowledge for later use. The tracking grid includes chapter/statutory citation, bill number for house bills, bill number for senate bills, internal comments, effective date, legal contact and business contacts. If public affairs responds externally, such as on a proposed rule, all that provided input (on the initial email) are provided an opportunity to review the final product. This transfer of intraorganizational dialogue on policy between public affairs and nonpublic affairs stakeholders contributes toward a holistic view of knowledge transfer.

Perceived barriers and challenges

There are numerous perceived barriers to effective intraorganizational engagement, which tend to differ from the perspectives of public affairs and nonpublic

affairs. The primary barriers from the perspective of the nonpublic affairs stakeholder are the ambiguity and complexity of policy itself, lack of time, lack of bandwidth and the high volume of email communication. The first barrier was presented in that public policy is often proposed as concepts or very complex with many variables that make analytics difficult to perform. Second, the lack of time and bandwidth emerged as challenges to fitting in public policy responsiveness amongst other (more primary) job responsibilities. Third, volume of emails, which appeared to be a direct reflection of the request to reply all. Finally, it was noted public affairs could improve on the follow-up, when a proposed rule becomes finalized (or law) to re-circulate the final outcome with the initial group.

From the public affairs perspective, primary barriers are finding the right stakeholders, lack of timely response to inquiries, volume of emails, and number of recipients on requests for input. The first and most notable challenge was ensuring the right internal stakeholders are included in a request for input. Sometimes in large organizations, knowing where and who to go for knowledge is complicated. Second, not receiving a timely internal response makes it very challenging for public affairs to effectively respond externally. Finally, the volume of emails and the number of recipients needs to be better balanced. If there are too many recipients on the email request, then no one may take ownership in responding.

However, most participants acknowledged that responsiveness was generally adequate, as the lack of timely responsiveness impacts the quality and context of an external information product, and may miss opportunities for policy engagement. Next, if

a public affairs professional doesn't know where to send a proposed public policy item, it can be a challenge to track down the best stakeholder, especially when an organization has several thousand employees. This was reiterated from public affairs participants, and reinforces the importance that public affairs maintain a consistent relationship/contact with dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholders, which may aid in transferring information to the best internal individual or department to respond.

Decision-making

The public affairs decision-making process at this organization appears to be inconsistent and driven towards issue-dependency. Some of the information products reviewed had public affairs and nonpublic affairs managers or directors be the signer. This suggests that decision-making flows may not be linear, and may depend on a specific leaders preference for final decision, or preference on whether to actually sign a public affairs information product. Nonetheless, improvement could be done as to whether the signer is always a chief, member of the executive leadership team, or the content expert.

Knowledge transfer occurs frequently in public affairs, but can come from many forms. Instead of the predominant ad-hoc, informal nature of responding to policy, when a public policy issue is highly complex or significant in perceived organizational impact, then a group or committee input may be necessary to generate a response and make final decisions. This may occur at the Strategy and Planning Committee level, comprised of mostly C-Suite individuals throughout the corporation. The organization has other committees, such as Polliwog, used to address different matters to the organization. In

these cases, meetings may take place through a more formalized process to generate a response. Public affairs has a more formal facilitator role in managing the flow of knowledge to an information product, and addressing conflict, rather than informal, ad-hoc interaction with a smaller number of stakeholders.

Organizational documents and public records demonstrated evidence that nonpublic affairs knowledge was utilized in the formation of the external information product. Public records showed specific responses, data, and analytics aided in providing specific context to a proposed public policy. In this case, most of the public records retrieved and organizational documents provided were in response to a proposed rule (regulatory process). The public affairs professional served as a conduit through the process, and packaged the knowledge into a commentary, and delivered in response to the proposal.

The theoretical framework provided an appropriate foundation to build the study. There is strong evidence to support knowledge transfer theory (theoretical framework) in the context of public affairs intraorganizational engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through reciprocation. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a reciprocal manner. Public affairs provides political acumen, external relationships

management, and policy analytics while the nonpublic affairs stakeholder provides content expertise, operational knowledge, and clinical implications to public affairs.

Conclusion

Case site C is a healthcare delivery organization headquartered in the upper Midwest. I collected primary case study data by interviewing four public affairs and four nonpublic affairs participants over a two-day site visit. Secondary data included organizational documentation provided by participants, and archival records available in the public domain. Interviews were transcribed and provided to participants for review and accuracy. Finalized transcripts were coded using an open technique aligned with the research questions, and analyzed in support with journal entries and thematic memos. To maintain some continuity with case sites A and B, codes aligned with text in site C were used to provide a seamless transition. However, the primary aspect to coding still adhered to an open approach, as several new codes emerged while others previously used in other sites were not used.

The public affairs function of the organization has a designated senior vice-president, part of the executive leadership team. The structure is hierarchical. Consistent public policy information flows in the form of a weekly email of news articles and public policy updates from public affairs to a select group of intraorganizational stakeholders, usually at the management level and those that express individual interest.

Intraorganizational engagement on public policy issues is often ad-hoc to a dedicated nonpublic affairs stakeholder most impacted by the policy issue with email communication being the primary form of interaction medium. Nonpublic affairs

appreciate information in the email to include the full text of the policy proposal, summary, and identification of salient issues. Organizational documentation provided evidence of interaction occurring, and public records demonstrate the use of nonpublic affairs knowledge in public affairs information products.

Perceived barriers to effective engagement and interaction differ between public affairs professionals and nonpublic affairs stakeholders. Nonpublic affairs stakeholders cite the lack of time in their daily work to dedicate to public policy responses, the ambiguity that public policy presents, and the high volume of information related to policy as the primary barriers to effective interaction and engagement. Public affairs responded with tracking the right nonpublic affairs stakeholder to aid in responding to policy issues, the lack of timely responses, and lack of understanding public affairs functions as barriers to ideal engagement.

Evidence collected helps fill in the gaps in the literature and to illuminate the black box of the study's conceptual framework. This case site has the most linear-based (methodical) process for gathering intraorganizational input. Having different decisionmakers on different issues suggests the process is largely dependent on the issue and who the issue is routed to in a nonpublic affairs function. This dynamic makes the conceptual framework a bit more challenging to fill in a process oriented way, despite the study designed through a process-based lens.

There is also strong evidence to support holistic knowledge transfer theory in the context of public affairs engagement in healthcare delivery organizations. The interaction is often bidirectional learning, driven by the need for relationship management through

reciprocation. This dynamic aligns with the holistic approach of knowledge transfer theory—which incorporates both the perspective of the sender and receiver of knowledge. The knowledge of public affairs and nonpublic affairs are very different, and need to be transferred effectively for use in information products. Interviewing and collecting data from both public affairs and nonpublic affairs aligns with the sender and receiver perspective in a reciprocal manner.