ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the audience role in shaping corporate involvement in social issues – identified as cause-related corporate outreach. Drawing upon a cultural studies perspective, I assert that, more than consumer, voter, or passive receptor of corporate messages, the audience is an active participant in the communication process. Specifically, I examine the participant experience of the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk. Grounded in a rhetorical theory of public relations, this study uses a variety of qualitative data-collection methods, including in-depth interviews, audio journals kept by walkers, participant observation, and post-walk focus groups to develop an audience-centered understanding of the walk experience and draw implications for public relations research and practice.

INDEX WORDS: Public Relations, Cause-Related, Marketing, Rhetoric, Epideictic, Avon, Breast Cancer, Social Issues, Qualitative Methods, Case Study, Corporate Outreach
60 MILES OF MEANING: UNDERSTANDING THE AVON 3-DAY WALK

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2002
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To Ric,

whose patience, selflessness, courage,
unflagging support, and enduring love
make this and all my achievements possible.

To my father,

Franklin P. “Tim” Hatfield, Jr.,

Who has always believed I can accomplish anything.

In memory of my mother,

Linda Davenport Hatfield,

whose tremendous faith, amazing courage,
joyful spirit, and unconditional love,
continue to sustain me in all my endeavors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. I am deeply grateful for all their support and encouragement.

My major professor, Dr. Peggy J. Kreshel is an inspirational mentor. Her faith in me and this project sustained me through the long, intense hours as I struggled to find my voice to tell the story of the 3-Day experience. She is my teacher, counselor, and friend. I am profoundly grateful for her support.

The members of my committee, Carolina Acosta-Alzuru, John M. Murphy, Leonard N. Reid, and Jeffrey Springston, have given me constant encouragement, sharing knowledge, providing advice, giving generously of their time. I appreciate all they have done to guide me along the way.

This study would not have been possible without the openness of each person who participated. Their willingness to share deep personal feelings give this dissertation a richness I could not have imagined when I began the research.

My years as a graduate student at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication have been enriched by the wonderful faculty and staff who have guided me through the program. I am inspired by the College-wide camaraderie and support I found during my years here. I only hope I can follow in the example they set.

My heartfelt thanks, also, to everyone in the Peabody Awards office. I have been honored to work with Dr. Horace Newcomb, Dr. Louise Benjamin, and the late Dr. Barry Sherman, who gave me valuable advice, allowing me to grow as a scholar, and teacher,
while being a part of the wonderful Peabody program. I am forever grateful to them, along with Tom Hoover and Danna Williams, for their friendship and professionalism in a challenging time of transition.

I am fortunate to be part of an incredible class of doctoral students, Ed Gans, Karyn Jones, George Daniels, Yeora Kim, and Hyung Jin Woo, all of whom have been wonderful friends and sources of encouragement throughout these past three years. All the Grady Ph.D. students are a special group, outstanding in their scholarship, steadfast in friendship.

My family has supported me through all my transitions. My brothers, Trey and Shan, are my friends as well as brothers, loyal and loving, always willing to help their big sister. My grandmothers, Adelaide Hatfield and Eileen Davenport, have been wonderful examples of faith and love. Their love of knowledge is a valuable heritage, of which I am grateful.

My parents, F.P. “Tim” Hatfield, Jr. and the late Linda Davenport Hatfield, always encouraged me to follow my dreams, instilling in me a sense of independence and an enduring faith in God.

My in-laws, “mom” Joyce and Andrew Stewart and “sisters,” Patta and Kristi, have become my family in the truest sense – ever-encouraging, wonderful friends, who have lovingly embraced me into their family and given me unflagging support in all I do.

Finally, my husband Ric, the most incredible person I know, has faithfully supported, encouraged, and uplifted me, through five years of graduate school, sacrificing so I could complete my journey to the Ph.D. He is my source of inspiration. His love is my most valuable possession.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROLOGUE: SORTING THROUGH SUBJECTIVITIES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-Related Corporate Outreach</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing the Concept: Cause-Related Corporate Outreach</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Case Studies to Guidelines: Successful Outreach Programs</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies of Effects on Consumers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Commentary on Implications of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Involvement in Social Issues</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for a Theoretical Foundation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 THEORY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Traditional Public Relations Paradigm: A Systems Approach</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations as Rhetoric</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Models and Public Relations Communication</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Experience, Community and Values ............................................................. 123
Implications ........................................................................................................ 127
Limitations and Future Research ................................................................. 130
REFERENCES ................................................................................................... 135
APPENDICES .................................................................................................... 145
    A Profiles of Interview Participant .............................................................. 145
    B Consent Forms ........................................................................................ 151
    C Interview Guide ....................................................................................... 155
    D Journal Guidelines .................................................................................. 156
    E Focus Group Moderator Guide/Questionnaire ........................................ 158
...[B]reast cancer has its great epideictic events, its pilgrimages and mass gatherings where the faithful convene and draw strength from their numbers

Barbara Ehrenreich, 2001, p. 50
PROLOGUE

SORTING THROUGH SUBJECTIVITIES

As I approached the sign-in table at the Crew 101 meeting, I felt my stomach turn, my nervousness producing a physical reaction. I had not had the time or inclination to eat before making the 70-mile drive from Athens to Atlanta, and I was grateful for an empty stomach; I had butterflies. Would the other crew members be able to identify me as an informant, a spy, there to observe the inner workings of the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk, to find out what the experience was really like? I felt like a phony, and I was sure the others—the true believers—could see through my cover. I kept telling myself it was silly to feel this way. They, the believers, did not know I voluntered for the 3-Day crew to be a participant observer of the Walk. And did it really matter? I was perfectly willing to give it my all, throwing myself into whatever tasks I was assigned. After all, everyone here at the meeting had a different reason for crewing, and mine was perfectly legitimate.

But I could not shake the feeling. For weeks, I had agonized about how immersed I should become as an observer. Should I actually register to walk? The commitment to participate in the Avon 3-Day is significant. Participants have to raise $1900 and train for months to be ready to walk an average of 20 miles on three consecutive days. Would I have been able to raise the money, give up the time to train, walk, and still maintain enough emotional distance to prevent myself from “going native,” becoming so involved that I would be blind to the meaning of the experience? I did not think so. I considered being a non-participating observer, following the route with no official role, simply
watching and taking notes. But, I would miss much of the experience—how participants interacted; 24/7 of togetherness for three days; and the adventure of camping in little tents, sometimes with strangers, showering in tractor-trailers, and using porta-potties. I needed to be more involved to understand the experience. Finally, I decided to be a participant observer as a crew member.

The crew would function in all aspects of the Walk, advancing the campsites to prepare the grid for the “tent-city” and putting up large tents for camp offices like medical, massage, and concierge. We would prepare meals, set up the stage, clean up debris, haul camping gear, and otherwise ready the camp. Our teams would set up pit-stops and grab-and-go stops, dispensing water, Gatorade, and snacks. We would mark the route with signs each day. We would follow the walkers in “sweep” vans picking up participants unable to complete that day’s miles. We would work as security on the route and around the campsite. We would be safety monitors during the Walk, riding motorcycles and bikes, encouraging walkers. The specialty crew members would provide medical services and massage. In other words, we would work for and with the walkers throughout the 3-Day. And while we would not walk, we would share much of the walker experience.

Crewing seemed the perfect solution. But, as I sat in our first organizational meeting, getting an introduction to crew responsibilities, I was rethinking what I thought had been the ideal compromise. I talked to the people around me and found that many had walked the year before and decided to be a part of the crew this year. Many of them even raised money, though fundraising was not a requirement for crew. Now, I was really feeling like a fake. The leader of the session asked us to tell why we wanted to be a part
of the 3-Day. Many of the stories were touching: the breast cancer survivor who could not physically do the Walk; the husband of a walker/survivor who was crewing to support his spouse. I was grateful time ran out before it was my turn. I felt the need to validate my reasons for being there. Yes, I was a researcher. But beyond that, what personal motives might have driven me to be a part of the event? What subjectivities led me to do this study?

I began a list of qualities that made me believable as a 3-Day participant. My mom had been a breast cancer survivor. But, as difficult the experience was for her, my mother did not take on breast cancer as her personal issue. Still, several causes were important to her, and she taught me the importance of making charitable contributions, being involved in the community, and doing things to enhance my self-confidence. I wasn’t satisfied with my list. I looked at my history of raising money and participating in charitable events. I was coming up short. Years ago, I was involved in Youth Against Cancer, walked in March of Dimes walks, supported a hospice and a children’s home with donations, and was involved in other charitable functions through work. But lately, even as cancer diagnoses hit close to home, I found it difficult to take on new causes. Last year when a Light the Night flyer came in the mail from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society I kept it, thinking I might participate. But the dates came and went and the flyer finally went in the trash can.

There were plenty of reasons why participating in the 3-Day was a realistic activity for me, but I was still troubled: Is the 3-Day Walk something I would consider being a part of if I was not researching it? I wanted to say, yes, this is a worthwhile cause, a bold statement, an awareness campaign, and an issue I believe in. These things are all
true, but I was uncomfortable making such a commitment. I admired those who could—the people participating in my study, the professors who walked in 1999 and 2000 and introduced me to the Avon 3-Day, and the people around me at the Crew 101 meeting who had walked in previous years. But I knew deep down that I never would have been a part of this event except as a researcher.

It has taken me months to articulate why I felt that way. I really did not understand what made me so reticent to participate. I believe in individual activism, in people working for important causes. And, as a former public relations professional, I believe organizations should be socially responsible, taking on social issues that are important to their constituencies, acting as responsible citizens within their communities, be they local or global. Ultimately, it was an article by social commentator Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) on America’s obsession with breast cancer fundraisers and the cultish nature of the movement that helped me to discover issues I had internalized but could not express.

First, not unlike religion, the 3-Day almost completely absorbs participants’ lives, with daily rituals of exercise, fellowship with other believers, and sermons (in meetings, videos, newsletters, and emails) about how to prepare and walk and live. Participation, for those who commit, is akin to joining an evangelical church. The problem is, I am a Methodist, comfortable with the methodical, staid ritual found in the traditional service and the established tenets of the Methodist faith. Just as a Methodist may share the same basic beliefs with the evangelical movement, I may believe in the values of the 3-Day, but I express and embody those beliefs differently.
And I asked myself, did I share Avon’s beliefs about what society should do regarding breast cancer? Avon found its niche within the surfeit of breast cancer fundraisers: helping the medically underserved. Many people accept and embrace this remedy, as evidenced by the popularity of the Walk. Since its inception, the money raised through the 3-Day Walks has gone to support efforts that help people who cannot afford screening and detection services or treatment. Avon’s message is that early detection saves lives. In 2001, Avon began to fund research efforts, as well. Do I believe in Avon’s solution to the breast cancer problem? The quick answer was yes. I believe in the efforts funded by the Walk. Yet, there were some issues I held close that made me hesitant to join the fray. In her article, “Welcome to Cancerland,” Barbara Ehrenreich articulated reservations that matched my own:

To the extent that current methods of detection and treatment fail or fall short, America’s breast-cancer cult can be judged as an outbreak of mass delusion, celebrating survivorhood by downplaying mortality and promoting obedience to medical protocols known to have limited efficacy. And although we may imagine ourselves to be well past the era of patriarchal medicine, obedience is the message behind the infantilizing theme in breast-cancer culture, as represented by the teddy bears, the crayons, and the prevailing pinkness. You are encouraged to regress to a little-girl state, to suspend critical judgment, and to accept whatever measures the doctors, as parent surrogates, choose to impose. (2001, p. 52)

Ehrenreich’s words really hit home. People die. Regardless of how early the cancer is diagnosed, some people will die. Participants in the Avon 3-Day talk about people who have died of breast cancer, usually in terms of not wanting others to suffer as they have seen their friends or loved ones suffer. It is all about surviving, a term Ehrenreich, herself a survivor, disparages:

[T]he mindless triumphantism of ‘survivorhood’ denigrates the dead and the dying. Did we who live ‘fight’ harder than those who’ve died? Can we claim to be ‘braver,’ better, people than the dead? And why is there no
Underlying this emphasis on survival is the belief that early detection and treatment, along with research, are the answers. And, while no one ever blames the person dying of breast cancer, the idea that early detection may have prevented the progression of the disease seems somehow trite. As I have seen through others’ experiences, cancer can sometimes be oblivious to treatment, regardless of the stage in which it is diagnosed. Detection protocols are limited. My mother's mammogram, after she found a lump during a breast self exam, did not indicate cancer. At her insistence, the lump was removed, and an ashen surgeon emerged from the operating room to tell us of his surprise. It was, indeed, cancer. Had my mother relied on the recommendations of “authorities,” the disease might have progressed and spread. (Fortunately, my mother, always extremely independent, did what she thought best, supported by the family doctor, if not the specialists.)

Since reading Ehrenreich’s critical commentary, I have been trying to find that middle ground that allows me to engage the parts of me that believe in corporate responsibility, breast cancer detection and screening, and personal activism, yet are uncomfortable with the evangelical rituals and one-sided messages and goals found in events like the 3-Day. I am able to relieve my discomfort through the experiential stories I tell. The premise of this dissertation is that the audience or active public has a significant role in an epideictic event like the 3-Day. Audience members are a thinking, feeling, functioning part of the event, and their stories reveal particular understandings of their contributions to the breast cancer cause and the benefits derived from their
involvement. As I bracket my preconceived ideas about the event, I am more open to the meanings the 3-Day has for participants.

My perceptions, as I observed and later analyzed the data, also were influenced by my background as a public relations professional. In my role as observer, I looked at the event as a former communicator, a role in which I produced large and small events, wrote advertisements and public service announcements, and worked as both a media liaison and as part of the media. I also recruited and coordinated volunteers for special projects. My philosophy about public relations communication is grounded by an understanding that corporate communication to internal and external publics is rhetorically based. That is, that corporate communication is purposeful, intended to persuade. This lens shapes how I teach public relations to university students. I teach them to write with a purpose, and to write for specific audiences, using tools long practiced by professional communicators. I also teach them to listen to and understand the audiences with whom they communicate. It is from this perspective that I read Avon 3-Day literature, listened to walkers, participated as a crew member, and analyzed the data I collected.

In the end, no one “outed” me as a spy within the ranks of the crew. I did not hide my motives, nor was I overtly noticeable as a researcher. I did my crew job, talked to people, and took extensive notes. My discomfort subsided (although not completely). My anxiety at that first crew meeting necessarily moved me to the act of self-reflection, and then, to a critical self-awareness as I listened to and sought to understand others.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the audience role in shaping corporate involvement in social issues—what I here identify as cause-related corporate outreach. I assert that, more than consumer, voter, or passive receptor of corporate messages, the audience is an active participant in the communication process. Specifically, I examine the participant experience of the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk. Grounded in a rhetorical theory of public relations, this study uses qualitative methods to capture the walker experience in this highly visible corporate outreach effort.

Cause-Related Corporate Outreach

[C]ause marketing is the hottest trend in fundraising for the perennially cash-short nonprofit world. It is also an increasingly popular way for corporations to hitch their reputations to do-good organizations. (Salmon & Sun, 2002)

According to recent literature, corporate involvement in social issues is increasing steadily. In an annual survey of corporate giving, industry researchers found corporate contributions to causes in 1999 totaled at least $3.4 billion—up from $3 billion in 1998, (Tillman, 2000). Corporate giving in 2000 slowed, but still showed a nine-percent growth, and despite an economic slowdown, industry experts speculate that giving after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States will lead to further increases in corporate charitable contributions (Cooney, 2001).
Cause-related corporate outreach takes many forms, from cash donations to event sponsorships to marketing products with portions of the proceeds going to a cause. While U.S. companies have long been involved in charitable activities, programs that include consumer participation first began to evolve in the 1980s. They now play a significant role in corporate-giving strategies (Burlingame & Young, 1996; Koch, 1979; Levy, 1999; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988), with 85% of corporations and 65% of not-for-profit organizations participating in cause marketing in 1999 (Tillman, 2000).

In what is credited as the first national, consumer-based, giving program, American Express organized a campaign to help renovate the Statue of Liberty in 1983. For each dollar consumers charged to their American Express cards, the company donated a penny to the renovation fund. The program sparked the now oft-used term “cause-related marketing” or CRM (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; see also, Ebenkamp, 1999; Smith & Higgins, 2000). Later, the company launched a program to donate money to Share Our Strength, an agency providing food to the needy, and more recently, American Express sponsored Charge for the Cure for breast cancer. Again, donations were based on consumers’ use of the credit card (Barone, Miyazaki & Taylor, 2000; Howard, 2001).

Today, consumer-based outreach initiatives are diverse, engaging consumers in a wide variety of ways. For example, some ask consumers to buy a product. Hungry for chocolate? Have a Hershey’s and you’ll also be helping support UNICEF (Strahilevitz & Meyers, 1998). How about some ice cream? Buy an ice cream bar from Good Humor-Breyers and you are donating to the World Wildlife Fund (Thompson, 2001). Need a vacuum? Purchase a Eureka Whirlwind LiteSpeed and a dollar goes to the Susan G.
Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (www.komen.org). Other consumer-based outreach programs promote a cause as socially important, the company as “doing good” by supporting it, and the consumer as key to keeping that support available (Steckel & Simons, 1992). For example, Coors brewing promotes literacy, and its involvement in the cause to consumers, through marketing campaigns, stressing the importance of consumer support of its outreach (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994). And, Home Depot launched a marketing campaign in 1999 to highlight its charitable contributions to help community-building projects. The campaign, according to a company spokesperson, is about building the relationship between the company and its customers (Bond, 1999, p. 1H). In each of these examples, the customer does nothing beyond purchasing a product s/he already wants/needs. Other corporate outreach efforts include sponsorship of fundraising events in which the public participates. For example, Tommy Hilfiger U.S.A. has sponsored "Play For Kicks," a children’s soccer tournament to raise money for St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. And, Danskin sponsors triathlons for women, in which female athletes compete; their entry fees benefit the breast cancer cause. Avon’s Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk, the subject of this study, is an example of extreme consumer participation; participants take action well beyond the simple purchase of a product.

Since the 1990s, health-related issues (from AIDS, to blindness, cancer, muscular dystrophy, and multiple sclerosis, to name just a few) have been among the more popular causes with which organizations associate (Tillman, 2000; Howard, 2001; Polonsky & Wood, 2001)). Among diseases, breast cancer is one of the most fashionable, garnering support from American Express, Ford Motor Company, Lee Jeans, the U.S. Postal Service, New Balance, Kellogg, American Airlines, Dreyer’s Ice Cream, BMW, Estee
Lauder, and Avon (Howard, 2001; Polonsky & Wood, 2001). The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation alone lists 43 major corporate partners, from airlines, to hotels, food distributors, clothing companies, movie theaters, sporting associations, employment agencies, and shoe companies. Many of these companies sponsor Komen’s “Race for the Cure,” the largest series of 5K runs/fitness walks in the world, with more than 100 races slated for 2002. Sponsorships cover the cost of the event, while participants’ registration fees support breast cancer initiatives in their area and research funded by the Komen Foundation. Together with participants and sponsors, Komen has raised more than $240 million since its inception in 1982 (www.komen.org).

While not suggesting that Komen and Avon are competitors, the extraordinary success of Avon’s effort are evident when viewed relative to Komen. Avon is a single corporation, through its Worldwide Fund for Women’s Health, has raised more than $190 million for women’s health issues since 1992. The Fund has channeled more than $140 million to breast cancer causes, making the cosmetic company the largest corporate supporter of the issue (Newsome, 2002). Avon’s goal for 2002 is to top $250 million in donations to breast cancer (Avon website, www.avoncompany.com/women/avoncrusade.html). The following sections discuss Avon’s history of charitable giving and its involvement in the 3-Day Walks.

**Avon**

Avon began employing “Avon ladies” to sell cosmetics door-to-door in 1886, and now has 3.5 million representatives in 139 countries, and sales of almost $6 billion per year. Widely recognized as a “woman’s company,” Avon has cultivated that image through comprehensive corporate outreach campaigns targeted toward women’s issues:
breast cancer (Breast Cancer Crusade); fitness (Avon Running – Global Women’s Circuit); entrepreneurship (Women of Enterprise Program); and overall health (Worldwide Fund for Women’s Health) (Avon Annual Report 2001; www.avoncompany.com). All of these programs are administered by the Avon Foundation (see Figure 1), which was founded in 1955 to “provide much needed services and financial support in the cities, towns and villages where Avon does business” (www.avoncompany.com/women/avonfoundation). The Foundation’s mission is to “improve the lives of women and their families.”

![Avon's organization](image)

Figure 1: Avon’s organization

Avon’s link to primarily female issues is a deliberate effort to address its constituents’ needs and interests. Through research, Avon determined that health issues, particularly breast cancer, resonated with its key publics. In a 1994 interview, a company spokesperson noted: “We felt the sincere need, almost an imperative, to continue to find ways to give back to the people who have sold our products for 108 years and to the people who have bought them” (Larson, 1994, p. 17). She attributed the success of
Avon’s outreach to how well the causes match company values, which, according to its website, are ‘trust, respect, belief, humility and high standards’ (www.avoncompany.com/about/diversity).

The largest of the Foundation’s programs, the Avon Worldwide Fund for Women’s Health, began in 1992, and has fundraising initiatives in 34 countries, on four continents. The mission of the Fund is improving ‘the health of women globally’ and increasing ‘awareness of women’s health issues.” While breast cancer is the main issue in each of its 34 initiatives, other issues include: support of elderly caregivers (Japan); cervical cancer (Philippines); ‘women’s’ cancer (Central America and Italy); women and children in need and muscular dystrophy (Germany) (www.avoncompany.com/women/).

Most of the $190 million raised for the Fund has been through its U.S.-based Avon Breast Cancer Crusade, which began in 1993. The cause-marketing campaign raises money for breast cancer education programs, patient services for medically underserved women (low-income, un- and under-insured), and breast cancer research. Avon raises funds for the Crusade by selling ‘pink ribbon products,”¹ and sponsoring the Breast Cancer 3-Day Walks (www.avoncompany.com/women/avoncrusade).

**Avon Breast Cancer 3-DayWalks**

The bulk of monies raised for the Crusade have come from the 3-Day Walks. Avon partnered with Pallotta Teamworks (hereon identified as Pallotta), a for-profit cause-marketer specializing in extreme events, for the first Walk in October, 1998. More

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than 2,000 people walked from Santa Barbara to Malibu, California, raising $4.2 million for the breast cancer cause (Pallotta, 2001). In 1999, the company sponsored four Walks in cities across the United States; it sponsored nine in 2001, and will host 13 in 2002. The Walks are challenging, both physically and emotionally. In order to participate, walkers must raise $1,900. Then, they walk an average of 20 miles for each of three consecutive days. In four years, more than 58,000 walkers have raised almost $186 million² for breast cancer education, programs to help medically underserved groups gain access to mammograms and other services to enhance early detection of the disease, and, since 2000, for research (Avon, 2001; Pallotta Teamworks, 2002). As of 2003, Avon will no longer sponsor the 3-Day Walks, bowing to shareholder and public criticism that too little of the proceeds have gone to breast cancer (net proceeds averaged 63%³ of monies raised). The company continues to support the 2002 events. Pallotta has vowed to continue to produce the Walk with a new sponsor and/or beneficiary (Crary, 2002; see also, www.avoncrusade.com; www.breastcancer3day.org).

The relationships that exist within this cause-marketing event are complex, and vast in number. Walkers volunteer their bodies and their fundraising capabilities, and spend months preparing to walk in the name of breast cancer, for Avon. Training in Avon t-shirts, and wearing “Ask me about the 3-Day” buttons, walkers become spokespeople for the event, breast cancer, and Avon. Families work around walker training schedules. Crew members volunteer to produce the event, from camp set-up to clean-up, food preparation, medical services, and a multitude of other jobs. Donors give to walkers, who

² The net donation to charity from the walks was $116,979,000, or 62.82% of the $186 million raised.
³ The Better Business Bureau guidelines for charitable giving warn against giving money to an organization if less than 50% of proceeds go to the cause. While the Walks generate on average almost 63%, critics argue Avon should be providing more monetary resources to produce them.
ultimately give to the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade, which dictates how monies are
distributed. For three days, the cities, towns, and neighborhoods along the routes make
room for 2,000 to 4,000 walkers who disrupt normal traffic flow to make a statement
about their cause. And, of course, Avon has relationships to all these publics, in addition
to internal publics (e.g., shareholders, employees) and critics. Adding to the complexity is
Pallotta, the event producer, which serves as an extension of Avon, coordinating all
aspects of the 3-Day, including marketing, recruiting participants, collecting donations,
and planning and orchestrating the Walks.

The Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk is an extreme, cause-marketing event. It is
physically demanding. Its fundraising requirements are substantial. The magnitude of the
grassroots efforts made by participants, who reach many more people than the thousands
actually participating, is nothing short of extraordinary, as is the event’s success in
raising money for the cause. Extreme events like the 3-Day are increasingly common in
American culture; many are produced by Pallotta.

Pallotta emerged in 1993 with the Tanqueray-sponsored California AIDS Ride—a
500-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It is now the largest, most
visible for-profit fundraiser, netting more than $222 million for AIDS and breast cancer
between 1993 and 2001. More than 124,000 people have participated in one of Pallotta’s
events (Pallotta Teamworks, Record of Impact, 2002). For five years, until it partnered
with Avon and breast cancer in 1998, Pallotta produced only the AIDS Rides. In 2002,
the company expanded its issue-related events to include other AIDS-related causes,

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4 Tanqueray no longer sponsors the AIDS Rides, although Pallotta still produces them without a corporate sponsor.
poverty, suicide prevention, and adoption (Pallotta, 2001). Each event requires a significant physical and fundraising commitment from participants. For example, AIDS Rides require participants to raise between $2,100 and $2,700, and ride a bicycle anywhere from 330 miles in three days to 575 miles in seven days. The most extreme event is the new African AIDSTrek, in which participants must raise $10,000, pay a $1,000 registration fee, and hike 70-75 miles over seven days in South Africa.

With the exception of the Avon 3-Day, Pallotta’s events have no corporate sponsors, nor does Pallotta link a product to an issue. Rather, the company’s business is producing extreme fundraising events, and marketing those events and the causes they benefit. The company recently published a catalog to recruit participants. The accompanying letter stated:

The world has known all kinds of catalogs. Catalogs for clothes. Catalogs for cars. But never a catalog for compassion. This is the most powerful array of opportunities ever assembled for the average citizen to make a difference in the world. It represents a milestone in the reinvention of citizen activism.

The emergence of “extreme” events and fundraising marketers/event coordinators is a phenomenon that both reflects and constructs cultural attitudes about extreme physical activity and activism. The very existence of a catalog of extreme events from which participants can choose (Pick an event, an adventure, a cause.), and the fact that almost 200,000 people have participated in a Pallotta event, are testimonial to the popularity of these events.

For public relations activities involving cause-marketing, whether from the charity or corporate perspective, this cultural phenomenon may indicate a need to be

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5 Pallotta charges a flat production fee to produce the events, which, together with the costs of the event, come out of monies raised by participants.
more “extreme” in their campaigns, providing opportunities for the public to be more actively involved, making a commitment with them to a cause. It is a notable shift in the way causes raise money, and in the way people participate in fundraising.

**Significance of Study**

In recent years, cause-related corporate outreach has become an increasingly important public relations activity and a highly visible part of American culture. This study examines the meaning participants construct during their involvement in a cause-related corporate outreach event, the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk. To public relations scholars, this study offers insight into the role corporate communication plays in defining and preserving community and social values. Current public relations theory, still dominated by excellence theory (Grunig & Grunig, 1990), tends to guide research to focus on the speaker, message, or effects. This study departs from that focus in two critical ways. First, it seeks a cultural understanding of the growing phenomenon of corporate involvement in social issues as it applies to a public’s involvement, shifting the traditional public relations research focus from an effects-based approach to one informed by cultural studies. Second, it expands upon a rhetorically based public relations theory to develop a theoretical foundation that acknowledges the active role of the audience or public, and investigates the experiential relationships of a public as it engages in a cause-related, corporate-sponsored event.

Methodologically, this investigation adds breadth to the tools that have traditionally been used in public relations research. Current research relies heavily on surveys and case studies within an organization. In contrast, this study assumes that “people’s understandings are trustworthy, interesting [and] illuminating” (Jensen &

We all create and sustain explanations and assumptions in order to construct identities, form alliances, make sense of things, and impose meaning and order on to the flux of experience. How we go about doing this, with what consequences, under various conditions – these things matter because different modes of casting up the world have different consequences. (Jensen & Pauly, 1997, p. 168)

As such, this study illustrates for researchers and practitioners alike, how qualitative methods can work together to uncover layers of meaning, to better understand how others ‘cast up the world,’” through their own words.

Cause-related corporate outreach efforts are not without controversy. Certainly, money raised benefits social causes, yet critics reproach corporations for commercializing issues, and thus, exploiting both charities and consumers (Lieberman, 2001). Critics are particularly outspoken in the case of disease-related marketing. In her article “Consuming Cancer Charity,” Janelle Taylor cautions: ‘[T]here is…something problematic about ‘charity consumption’…it encourages us to channel satisfaction with the state of the world into a desire to buy more things” (1994, p. 33).

As companies strive to be good corporate citizens, and corporate outreach continues to grow, criticism such as this points out the necessity for corporations to understand how their actions fit into a larger social world. This dissertation suggests ways in which corporations can view their activities within a broader cultural perspective. It also provides a context from which public relations practitioners can better understand the shared values that resonate with specific publics, and offers insight into the audience contribution to the communication triad of speaker/subject/audience. This understanding
can help practitioners build communication through epideictic events that is more mutually beneficial.

In the following chapters I explain the study in depth. In Chapter Two, I discuss the conceptual confusion in current literature on cause-related corporate outreach, and summarize approaches to the topic that arise in practitioner texts, academic studies, and social commentary. In Chapter Three, I discuss how rhetorically based public relations theory can be usefully expanded to be more audience-centric. This expanded theory provides the theoretical foundations for this study. At the conclusion of that chapter, the theory-driven research questions guiding this study are introduced. The next chapter articulates the epistemological and ontological assumptions which influenced my selection of methods, and explains the multiple methods used to answer research questions. It also explains the rigorous system of analysis I used to analyze the data. In Chapters Five and Six, I tell the story of the Avon 3-Day experience, constructed from the multi-layered data created in a collaborative effort by my participants and me. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I conclude with implications of the findings and offer suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature related to cause-related corporate outreach is unwieldy. Corporate outreach efforts such as Avon’s Crusade (in which a company or organization links its name or product to a social issue) are often identified as cause-related marketing (CRM). Although widely used, that term fails to reflect the breadth of corporate activity in social issues, and other terms with similar meaning are found throughout the literature. The resultant conceptual confusion is exacerbated by the multidisciplinary nature of research on the topic. Studies of corporate cause-related outreach are found in a variety of industry-specific journals, including marketing, philanthropy, advertising, business, and public relations, as well as in the mainstream press. College textbooks on marketing are more likely to mention CRM than are public relations texts that rarely use the term, but include instead, sections on philanthropic activities and event coordination (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2001). Nevertheless, the latest edition of a practitioner-authored public relations text has added a brief section on CRM in a chapter on integrated marketing communication (Seitel, 2001).

This chapter begins with an overview of the current literature on what I have here called cause-related corporate outreach. This discussion highlights the conceptual confusion to which I have alluded, and is followed by a review of literature in three areas: practitioner-produced guidelines for successful cause-related corporate outreach programs, academic investigation into consumer reaction to corporations’ outreach
efforts, and social implications of cause-related corporate outreach relationships as expressed in industry and academic journals and the mainstream press.

**Constructing the Concept: Cause-Related Corporate Outreach**

In one of the earliest studies of a cause-related marketing program, scholars Varadarajan and Menon (1988) note that the objectives of cause-related marketing programs include increased sales, enhanced corporate stature, protection against negative publicity, pacification of customers, eased market entry, and increased merchandising activity for the promoted brand. They suggest that CRM efforts to achieve these objectives differ from public relations, corporate philanthropy, sales promotion, corporate sponsorship and other corporate “good deeds,” but often blend elements of each activity. Adkins (1999), a marketing professional, defines cause-related marketing as “a commercial activity by which businesses and charities or causes form a partnership with each other to market an image, product or service for mutual benefit” (p. 11). Adkins views such partnerships not as philanthropy or altruism, but as business relationships set up by both the corporation and the cause to meet specific objectives – improved income and resources for the cause, and brand/image enhancement, public relations, and improved sales for the corporate sponsor.

These definitions are frustrating; they identify CRM primarily by comparison—not this, but this, and a blend of that—and definitions include and exclude different activities. For example, Varadarajan and Menon (1988) include corporate philanthropy in the mix, but more than a decade later, Adkins (1999) specifically excludes it. Despite the time passed, these definitional differences do not represent an evolution of the concept. In fact, the literature is rife with assorted terms with similar, but subtly different meanings,
the product of authors’ attempts to refine the concept to fit their individual needs. Other terms used for corporate involvement in social issues include ‘lifestyle marketing’ (Schreiber and Lenson, 1994), ‘public purpose partnerships’ (Steckel & Simons, 1992), ‘social marketing, charity marketing, corporate and strategic philanthropy, social investment, social marketing, responsible marketing, affinity marketing, public purpose marketing, passion marketing, passion branding, cause branding, sponsorship, sales promotion, PR and indeed, simply marketing’ (Adkins, 1999, p. 11). This assortment of labels speaks to both the complexity and variety of corporate activities in social issues and the difficulty practitioners and academics have in providing a conceptual framework from which to study the phenomenon.

Schreiber and Lenson (1994) use the term ‘lifestyle marketing’ to encompass a wide range of activities that includes corporate participation in community issues. Lifestyle marketing, they note, ‘is when a company associates itself with the lifestyle, beliefs, institutions, and culture of its target audience’ (p. 17). More than simply giving money, lifestyle marketing ‘shares values. It’s an overt demonstration that a company not only gives cash but shares certain attitudes and beliefs with its consumers’ (p. 18). This definition of lifestyle marketing most closely describes my approach to corporate involvement in social issues. A company’s strategic choice of issues reflects the values it wishes to share with its constituencies. However, the label remains an inadequate description of the scope of corporate activities. Corporations do not just market these values, they reach out to their publics, interacting with them. For this dissertation I will use the term ‘cause-related corporate outreach,’’ defined as the whole of an
organization’s involvement in social issues, including all outreach efforts from philanthropic giving to cause-related marketing.

From Case Studies to Guidelines: Successful Outreach Programs

A body of literature written primarily by public relations and marketing practitioners provides guidelines for successful corporate outreach programs. Typically, these guidelines have been derived from past corporate/non-profit partnership successes, and texts are grounded in case studies (Adkins, 1999; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Levy, 1999; Pringle & Thompson, 1999; Sagawa & Segal, 2000). These authors have conceptually diverse approaches to corporate outreach, including: the identification of a typology of corporate-cause relationships (Sagawa & Segal, 2000); a discussion of CRM’s effects on the corporate-consumer relationship (Adkins, 1999); and, a cultural explanation for consumers’ acceptance of CRM. The two sections that follow outline the basic premises of these studies and identify common guidelines that emerge.

The Case Study Literature

In Common Interest Common Good, Sagawa and Segal (2000) identify three types of ‘exchange partnerships” between business and nonprofit organizations — philanthropic, marketing and operational. Philanthropic exchanges include traditional philanthropy in which a company donates to charitable organizations, and strategic philanthropy in which a company chooses its exchange partner strategically with a focus on a corporate goal. Pfizer, a plumbing fixture manufacturer, engaged in traditional philanthropy by providing funds for community development surrounding their headquarters. An importer of African musical instruments in Rochester, New York
engaged in strategic philanthropy when they identified African American community and city leaders as a key audience and developed a giving strategy that would involve those publics (Sagawa & Segal 2000).

According to Sagawa and Segal (2000), marketing exchanges include identity building, sponsorship, and cause-related marketing and can be distinguished from philanthropic exchanges: “Companies seeking identity building partnerships often seek both to engage their many stakeholders… and to tie their company image to a cause or charity” (2000, p. 73). The distinction between marketing exchanges and strategic philanthropy is less clear. While marketing exchanges explicitly involve a link between a company or product and a charity, strategic philanthropy may not; otherwise, they seem to function in the same way. Lane Bryant, a clothing company for plus-size women, teamed with the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), an organization that encourages volunteerism among college students, to promote a clothing line for young women. COOL was paid for use of their logo, and in turn received widespread publicity through Lane Bryant’s marketing campaign (Sagawa & Segal, 2000).

Operational exchanges include human-resource exchanges and social enterprise. A social enterprise is a “nonprofit or government entity that operates like a business in how it acquires its resources” (Sagawa & Segal, 2000, p. 155). With human resources exchanges, a company works with a social agency to hire and/or train workers and provide other job-related services. Examples include welfare-to-work programs in which companies work with social agencies to train and hire workers to help them get off welfare.
Typologies such as the one suggested by Sagawa and Segal (2000) recognizably are artificial. For example, as noted, the line between strategic philanthropy and marketing exchanges is blurred. And, companies may engage in a variety of exchange partnerships within the same campaign, using philanthropic, marketing, and operational strategies interchangeably within the context of pursuing their corporate goals.

Adkins (1999), another practitioner-turned-author, advocates corporate involvement in causes, and uses case studies to arrive at guidelines for such involvement. As mentioned in the previous section, she defines CRM as a business exchange. Her book, *CauseRelated Marketing: Who Cares Wins*, targets corporations, emphasizing the positive impact CRM can have on consumer relationships. “The attitudes and perceptions of the consumer are vital and there is no question they can be strongly influenced by cause-related marketing and corporate social responsibility” (Adkins, 1999, p. 82).

Adkins contextualizes CRM within corporate social responsibility, corporate identity, corporate community investment, and marketing.

Pringle and Thompson (1999) suggest that increased market competition, fragmented media audiences, consumers’ need for ‘self-realization,’6 and declining trust in traditional institutions such as church and government are part of an environment in which companies can successfully earn consumer loyalty by partnering with social causes. According to Pringle and Thompson, marketing efforts have evolved from rational appeals, to emotional appeals, to spiritual appeals, in which the brand/company creates a soul or ethic through its involvement with a cause. For example, based upon its natural products and an owner with a reputation as an environmental activist, the Body

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6 Pringle and Thompson assert that consumers have progressed beyond seeking rational and emotional needs in the hierarchy of needs and are now seeking spiritual needs, or self-realization.
Shop became known as an environmentally conscious brand. Rather than marketing its products on the basis of consumer benefit, the Body Shop marketed its environmental ethic, its image. (Pringle & Thompson, 1999).

**Guidelines**

Given conceptual differences among the authors—Sagawa and Segal (2000) concentrate on organization-cause partnerships, Adkins (1999) centers on corporation-consumer relationships, and Pringle and Thompson (1999) focus on the evolution of consumer appeals—it is hardly surprising that guidelines they provide differ in focus. Nonetheless, several common guidelines emerge.

First, relationships between the brand/company and the cause should “make sense.” Sagawa and Segal (2000) use the example of Microsoft and the American Library Association. Microsoft developed the partnership strategically, donating products that could be used by libraries. Thus, the company provided a highly visible service to communities and enhanced corporate brand recognition. A second guideline is that outreach should be simplified so stakeholders can easily identify the relationship between a company/brand and a cause. For example, Pillsbury donates its products to Second Harvest, a national network of food banks, as a part of a program to help feed America’s hungry (Murphy, 1997). Adkins (1999) uses Avon’s Breast Cancer Crusade as an example in which the cause and the company are easily linked, in part because the relationship clearly makes sense – a “company for women” and a “women’s issue.”

Third, management, employees, suppliers and strategic partners must all be committed to the relationship. Levy (1999) notes that philanthropy is not a peripheral activity, but must be deeply imbedded in the corporate ethos or culture. Similarly, Pringle and Thompson
suggest that while ‘cause-related marketing is a commercial activity…it can only exist within a cultural and social context in which the concept and practice of charity is deeply imbedded” (1999, p. 251). Finally, advocates of outreach activities suggest that companies must approach outreach efforts as long-term commitments; company reputations and consumer identification of the company and cause build over time. (Adkins, 1999; Crimmins and Horn, 1996; Levy, 1999; Pringle & Thompson, 1999; Sagawa & Segal, 2000). For example, since its first CRM campaign in 1984 to fund Statue of Liberty renovations, American Express has built a reputation for supporting cultural heritage projects around the world by donating to similar causes, like the World Monuments Fund, which protects endangered works of art and architecture (Gross, 2001).

The guidelines formulated by these authors are derived from case studies. As such, they are not theoretically driven, and authors make no effort to develop theory about how the relationships among corporations, causes, and consumers function. Additionally, this literature is primarily focused on corporations and the issues and causes they support. The next section reviews studies on the impact of outreach efforts on consumers.

**Studies of Effects on Consumers**

Most of the literature on the effects of corporate involvement in social issues on consumer attitudes and behaviors are academic, and tend to be pragmatic, and like the studies just discussed, not driven by theory (Barone, Miyazaki & Taylor, 2000; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Harvey, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Webb & Mohr, 1999). Several recent studies have attempted to find links between consumer knowledge of a company’s
outreach programs and buying behavior or intention to buy. In a series of quasi-experimental studies with undergraduate students, Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor (2000) found respondents were more likely to choose products from companies that support social causes as long as price difference among other choices was small and as long as they perceived the company as supporting the social cause for appropriate reasons. In a study of the effects of sponsorship, Harvey (2001) surveyed internet users and found that while advertising may change consumers’ perceptions of a product, sponsorship effects changes in consumers’ perceptions of the sponsor, which by extension can influence perceptions of sponsor brands and products.

Researchers have also examined how consumers think about companies relative to their involvement in social issues. Webb and Mohr (1999) interviewed 44 men and women, aged 18 to 86, and found they had mixed attitudes toward companies engaging in cause-related marketing activities, ranging from skepticism of corporate motives to appreciation for company involvement. In a quasi-experimental study, Brown and Dacin (1997) found that respondents who were aware of a company’s involvement in social issues were more likely to evaluate a company and its products or services more favorably than if they were not aware of those activities. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) extended the Brown and Dacin study and found that “non-product dimensions” like corporate social responsibility helped create identification between consumers and a company. In other words, the consumers who were interested in an issue recognized similarities or differences between their own values and those of the corporation if the

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7 Sponsorship is when companies give cash, goods, or services to sponsor a cultural event(s). Events can be charity fundraisers, like the Avon 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk, music concerts, festivals, car races, and other sporting events. There is a large body of literature on sponsorship, but most of it focuses on sporting events rather than charitable events. Harvey’s study encompasses a range of sponsor types.

8 Their definition of cause-related marketing is consistent with that used by Varadarajan and Menon (1988).
company was involved in that issue. In addition, consumer evaluations of companies were more affected by negative reports on corporate social responsibility than positive (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

In a study of the value of corporate citizenship, Maignan, Ferrell and Hult (1999) found that companies actively involved in the local or global community were “systematically associated with enhanced levels of employee commitment, customer loyalty, and business performance – evaluated in terms of return on assets, return on investments, profits growth, and sales growth” (p. 464). The researchers identify four types of corporate social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical and discretionary. Of these four, discretionary responsibilities – an organization’s active involvement in the betterment of society – involve corporate involvement in social issues. But the four dimensions are closely related, according to the researchers. Findings suggest organizations that coordinate and monitor activities for all types of responsibilities are “more likely to successfully establish the image of a socially responsible organization” (p. 464). The authors conclude that corporations must be sensitive to their roles, meeting business/economic expectations, doing business legally and ethically, and contributing to society (Maignan, Ferrell & Hult, 1999).

While much of the literature on consumers comes from the academy, the industry is also interested in market effects of outreach campaigns, and results of national surveys frequently are reported in the mainstream press. For example, a Roper Starch Worldwide study found that a majority of respondents think it is important for companies to be good

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9 Corporate citizenship is defined as how well organizations meet responsibilities placed on them by their stakeholders (Maignan, Ferrell and Hult, 1999).
corporate citizens\textsuperscript{10}. The environment, education and health issues seem particularly relevant (Kroll, 1996).

These studies of effects provide empirical evidence of the benefits of corporate involvement in social issues, but like the case-study approach, fail to provide a strong theoretical base. The focus primarily is to understand consumer attitudes and behaviors. Although audience-based, and these effects studies make no attempt to understand the underlying meaning and shared values that exist in the audience-corporation-cause relationships, or the audience role in the communication process.

The research discussed thus far emphasizes the value of cause-related corporate outreach, and views corporate efforts to be socially responsible as positive. Yet, the practice is not entirely benign, even for those companies that might have the purest of intentions. The next section discusses some of the social commentary on societal implications of cause-related corporate outreach.

**Social Commentary on Implications of Corporate Involvement in Social Issues**

Literature focused on societal implications of corporate involvement in social issues is primarily critical of the practice, questioning corporate motives and raising legal and ethical questions. While literature providing guidelines for cause-related corporate outreach focuses on “successful” case studies, the critical literature points to questionable corporate relationships; the impact on giving by individuals; methods by which funds are disbursed and beneficiary decisions are made; political implications of corporate giving; and the potential for commercialization of disease. This critical literature emerges from three groups: scholars concerned with the ethical implications and effects of over-

\textsuperscript{10} Corporate citizenship is broadly defined as a company's efforts to meet its social responsibilities.
commercialization of cause-related corporate outreach; government officials concerned with legal questions; and activists and social commentators concerned with the impact corporate-giving programs have on the cause and society.

While these discussions are primarily found in industry and academic literature, the swift and widespread response of corporations, large and small, following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States resulted in public scrutiny of cause-related corporate outreach efforts in the mainstream press as well. This was especially true when some very visible charities like the American Red Cross came under fire for misappropriation of funds given specifically for September 11 relief. The rush of corporate involvement earned both praise and criticism. Consumer advocates criticized charities for “selling their good names” and corporations for “cash[ing] in on a tragedy through commercial tie-ins” (Salmon & Sun, 2002, p. A10). Others raised concern over the percentages of proceeds actually passed on to charities by companies that are frequently characterized as profiting from the misfortune of others (Briggs, 2001; Morello, 2001; Groves, 2002). These concerns are not new, but have been brought into sharper focus by events following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

A host of other concerns have raised both public and governmental scrutiny of corporate outreach efforts. These concerns include: the suggestion that companies use of charity logos might be perceived as an endorsement for the product/company and might, therefore, be misleading (see Abelson, 1999a); the fear that issues might be trivialized through their use in company advertising (see Parpis, 2000); and the possibility that corporate giving might have political effects (see Plys, 2001a, 2001b). Further, while industry professionals and academic writers acknowledge the strategic and self-serving
elements of corporate giving, social commentators frequently imply that corporate giving should be altruistic. These commentators question companies’ charitable involvements, claiming such corporate giving is solely public relations (Polonsky & Wood, 2001; Plys, 2001a).

Corporate outreach efforts related to disease have produced different types of criticisms. Some critics are concerned that companies look for “safe” issues and so may neglect worthy causes that are more controversial or have less appeal (Lieberman, 2001). Aging-related diseases do not have the same appeal to corporations as do diseases like breast cancer, one of the leading beneficiaries of corporate fundraising. Heart disease and lung cancer are also less popular causes both because the diseases may take longer to develop and because they are linked to behavioral causal factors (e.g., fatty diets or smoking) that have moral connotations. Lieberman (2001) indicts disease-related marketing: “Championing diseases has become a popularity contest that magnifies the disparities in the nation’s health-care system. Getting care to sick people, especially the poor, should not depend on what’s popular at the moment. These contests may effectively raise money and satisfy corporate objectives, but they are hardly the blueprint for defeating disease” (p. S3).

Taylor (1994) raises the issue of trivialization that results from the commodification of disease. Cosmetics companies that have product lines to ‘attend to ‘appearance related side effects’ of women’s cancer” are creating a market and convincing women with cancer they ‘heed’ those products (p. 30). “Charity consumption’ encourages us to deceive ourselves into thinking that buying more
things…will help change the world, while enlisting those who suffer in various ways to cooperate by masking their suffering and making it palatable” (Taylor, 1994, p. 33).

Ehrenreich (2001) cautions that the positive outlook disseminated through disease-related programs may also be deceptive:

Seen through pink-tinted lenses, the entire breast cancer enterprise—from grassroots support groups and websites to the corporate providers of therapies and sponsors of races—looks like a beautiful example of synergy at work: cult activities, paraphernalia, and testimonies encourage women to undergo the diagnostic procedures, and since a fraction of these diagnoses will be positive, this means more members for the cult as well as more customers for the corporations…But this view of a life-giving synergy is only as sound as the science of current detection and treatment modalities, and, tragically, that science is fraught with doubt, dissension, and what sometimes looks very much like denial (p. 51).

Ehrenreich eschews the breast cancer-related culture she found after her own diagnosis: “Everything in mainstream breast-cancer culture serves, no doubt inadvertently, to tame and normalize the disease: the diagnosis may be disastrous, but there are those cunning pink rhinestone angel pins to buy and races to train for.” (p. 49).

For-profit fundraising organizations that help corporations develop fundraising events for their adopted causes have also been the targets of critics. For example, one of the largest and most successful for-profit fundraising event producers, Pallotta Teamworks, has come under fire for the administrative costs of its events and the percentage of funds raised that actually go to charity. Pallotta produces Avon’s 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk, as well as several AIDS fundraising bike rides, and currently publishes a catalog of extreme events to raise money for a variety of causes such as, AIDS vaccines, suicide prevention, and finding homes for foster children (Pallotta TeamWorks, 2002). Critics, like breast cancer activist Barbara Brenner (2000), question
several aspects of Pallotta’s physically challenging events to raise money. First, Brenner says, the events are exclusionary in that the minimum fundraising criteria ($1,900) and health insurance requirements are prohibitive for the less affluent. Second, Brenner points out that administrative costs often take up 40 or 50% of the money actually raised by the event, money that would be better served going directly to the cause. And third, Brenner questions how money that goes to charity is actually distributed (Brenner, 2000).

Concerns like Brenner’s have been echoed throughout the country as Pallotta’s events have grown (Briggs, 2001; Morello, 2001; Rhone, 2001; Beam, 2000; Stockman, 2000). The Pallotta organization defends itself, arguing that their large-scale events raise more money than smaller fundraisers and the costs for putting on the events are justified (Morello, 2001). Plus, according to the company’s founder, Dan Pallotta, the events are more than just fundraisers, they are empowering experiences for the participants, allowing them to achieve ‘Impossible Dreams,” a phrase used as the company’s slogan (Pallotta, 2001). Pallotta’s observation introduces a dimension of cause-related corporate outreach that has rarely been examined: that of the audience (or public) as not merely a passive receptor of corporate communication but as an active participant in shaping the corporation and cause relationships.

The Need for a Theoretical Foundation

Current literature on corporate involvement in social issues provides a mix of labels and definitions, resulting in conceptual confusion that hinders conceptual and theoretical development. As this review suggests, existing research has examined the benefits of cause-related outreach for corporations and beneficiary organizations and the impact of corporate outreach on company image or product sales. Social commentary has
focused on the social and cultural implications of corporate involvement in social issues. Consumer-based research on corporate outreach efforts has tended to be effects-based. Researchers have largely ignored the meaning corporate cause-related outreach has for participating publics. As Schreiber and Lenson (1994) note, corporate involvement in community programs is a way for organizations to create programs to interact with consumers and create relationships based on shared values. They say the importance of such campaigns lies in the link between the company, the cause, and community values. This suggests research on the meaning participating publics derive from cause-related corporate outreach efforts would be a valuable addition to existing work.

In addition to the need for a different approach to audience research, the conceptual confusion found in the literature also points to a need for a clear theoretical foundation from which to study corporate outreach efforts (Cornwell and Maignan, 1998). This study identifies corporate outreach as a function of public relations, more specifically, as discussed in Chapter Three, corporate rhetoric. The emphasis of this study is on the identification of a theoretical foundation on which to base future research on cause-related corporate outreach activities.
CHAPTER THREE

THEORY

In a professional field such as public relations, I believe, scholars must go beyond criticizing theories; they also have the obligation to replace theories with something better – an obligation many critical scholars do not fulfill (James Grunig, 2001, p. 17).

I recently had a discussion about public relations theory with a mass communication scholar who scoffed at the idea that public relations had a recognizable theoretical base. Grunig’s excellence theory of public relations practice is currently the standard to which other public relations theories are compared, but as Grunig himself notes, excellence theory is much maligned in the literature for its perceived disregard of the realities of practice (Grunig, 2001; Pasadeos, Renfro & Hanily, 1999). In the last decade, public relations scholars have made a concerted effort to explore paradigms offering more explanatory power than existing models, including postmodernism (Holtzhausen, 2000), feminism (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2000), and rhetoric (Heath, 2000). These competing paradigms challenge the dominant systems approach, creating a paradigmatic struggle within the field that may exacerbate the perception that public relations scholarship is theoretically challenged (Hallahan, 1993), but that has done much to invigorate research in the field.

In the growing body of literature placing public relations within a rhetorical framework, scholars acknowledge the persuasive elements of public relations practice and use the rich history of rhetorical theory as a theoretical foundation (Heath, 1993; Hoover, 1997; Miller, 1989; L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Toth & Heath, 1992). Like some
rhetorical research, analysis of public relations practice tends to focus on the communicator and message. Recognition of the role of audience—or targeted public—as an active participant in the communication process is largely absent (Toth, 1992; see e.g., Crable and Vibbert, 1983). As will be noted in the section that follows, this disregard of the audience is central to Grunig and Grunig’s (1990) discontent with models of communication that appear to be asymmetrical (e.g. press agentry). The Grunigs conceptualize an active public in the symmetrical model and a passive public in asymmetrical models; they do not acknowledge the public’s role in negotiating messages that are seemingly one-sided. In contrast, rhetorical theory founded in Aristotle’s doctrine places an emphasis on the active role of the audience in every rhetorical situation. This chapter begins with an overview of the traditional paradigm guiding public relations research, followed by discussion of an alternative, rhetorically based paradigm and theory. I then situate cause-related corporate outreach within the rhetorical approach and introduce the research questions addressed in this study.

The Traditional Public Relations Paradigm: A Systems Approach

The dominant paradigm guiding public relations research is founded in a systems approach to organizational communication activities. Using this paradigmatic approach, Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models of public relations practice: (1) one-way asymmetric communication represented by press agentry and publicity; (2) one-way asymmetric communication identified as the public information model; (3) two-way asymmetrical communication in which the organization seeks input from its publics in the form of market/audience research; and (4) two-way symmetrical communication in which the organization cooperates and negotiates with its publics. According to them, the
purpose of the communication determines symmetry, and so, is a value-laden variable: “Purpose describes whether the model is asymmetrical or symmetrical. Asymmetrical communication is imbalanced; it leaves the organization as is and tries to change the public. Symmetrical communication is balanced; it adjusts the relationship between the organization and public” (emphasis in original, Grunig & Grunig, 1990, p. 6). The parties involved in the communication are “equal participants in a communication process that seeks mutual understanding and balanced, two-way effects” (p. 71). Later, Grunig and Grunig (1990) argued that the two-way symmetrical model is the most ethical, and in their assessment, the most “excellent” model of communication, thus, the excellence theory.

Characterizing two-way symmetrical communication as the most ethical public relations practice inevitably places a cloud over practitioners who practice any of the other three models. As Grunig and Grunig (1990) found, “Organizations practice the least excellent models, press agentry and public information, more than the excellent model” (p. 29). Other researchers have argued for a “contingency theory” of public relations in which practitioners use different models of communication dependent upon the situation (Cancel et al, 1997). The contingency theory takes the stigma from public relations practice using communication models other than two-way symmetrical, providing for situations such as press agentry that require asymmetrical communication. However, contingency theory does not provide a clear defense of the other models as ethically viable communication techniques. Rather, it contends that use of asymmetrical communication is necessary given certain situations. That is, the audience is still considered the passive receiver, but the organization is justified in treating them so.
The systems approach has contributed valuable insights into public relations practice and lively debate about what constitutes ethical public relations. Still, as Grunig (2001) asserts above, scholars are obligated to “go beyond criticizing theories,” and to begin to replace them with “something better,” providing alternatives that will reinvigorate a field of study that is searching for a theoretical identity. That is, the time has come to stop arguing the merits/problems of symmetrical communication and begin building a theory of practice on alternative paradigmatic foundations. Rhetorical theory is one such alternative.

**Public Relations as Rhetoric**

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991).

Public relations is an organization’s efforts to win the cooperation of groups of people (Lesly, 1981, p. 32).

The ancient texts of the sophists, Aristotle, Plato, and other classical rhetoricians provide a rich theoretical foundation; twentieth century works (e.g., Bahktin, 1981; Burke, 1950; Condit, 1985; Perelman, 1979) develop modern thought about rhetorical communication, expanding rhetoric to include media beyond the oral speech, and extending and segmenting the audience to better understand the meanings they construct from texts. Rhetoric in today’s society takes many forms. Like the ancient Greeks, we make use of rhetoric in the courts and legislatures and ceremonially (Perelman, 1979). However, over time, the definition of speaker has evolved from a single individual (usually male) to become more inclusive (including, for example, all men, women, races, groups and organizations); channels of communication have expanded from the oral speech to include various print media, broadcast, internet, interpersonal, etc.
In terms of the evolution of the organization as speaker, Cheney (1991) writes, “The contemporary bureaucratic organization is fundamentally a rhetorical enterprise. The organization seeks to establish or reinforce certain value premises in the minds of its audiences so that members of the audience will make decisions in accord with the preferences of the controlling members of the organization” (p. 8). He argues that in our society, corporations (or organizations) have historically been granted legal status as “legal persons” who may speak with only slightly limited First Amendment freedom. When organizations defend themselves in courts of law, lobby policymakers, and make ceremonial statements they are speakers, sources of messages, public rhetors.

Scholars in the field recognize public relations as rhetoric and persuasion. For example, Cheney (1992) identifies public relations as the “study and practice of corporate public rhetoric” (p. 166), and Heath (1993) contends that rhetoric is the “essence of public relations” (p. 142). Many public relations scholars (Toth and Heath, 1992; L'Etang and Pieczka, 1996; Cheney, 1991; Hoover, 1997) view rhetoric as a meaningful tool in the study of public relations. “A rhetorical paradigm of public relations,” Heath writes, “captures the meaning that shapes the social reality by which people have similar thoughts, contest points of view, make judgments, and regulate their behavior and that of others” (1993, p. 142-143).

That rhetoric may “regulate” the behavior of others has been viewed as problematic; rhetoric has long been criticized as a tool for manipulation. Aristotle was the first to come to rhetoric’s defense (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991). He says rhetoric is useful at times when truth is not readily apparent. For Aristotle, rhetoric is a dialogue in which the speaker engages an audience based on shared knowledge to put forth an argument.
about something that may not be ‘known’ in the sense of a shared truth. Aristotle
believes the judgment and choices of the audience are at the heart of rhetoric (Farrell,
1993). Farrell (1976) argues that for communication to be rhetorical, the outcome must
not be predetermined, but rather, is contingent upon how the audience responds. Toth and
Heath (1992) note that while rhetoric ‘can be thought of as a one-way flow of
information, argument, and influence whereby one entity persuades and dominates
another…in the best sense, rhetoric should not be thought of as monologue, but dialogue”
(p. xi-xii). For example, speaking in the context of this study, the audience, or publics,
share a basic knowledge of breast cancer—who it affects (primarily women), methods for
detection and treatment—but cannot know which research direction will lead to a cure.
Advocates for a research agenda into environmental causes of the disease use basic
shared knowledge to build an argument for their proposal, but the outcome is unknown
(in this case, to both the advocate and audience). Based on the shared knowledge, the
audience makes a decision about the argument put forth by the research advocate.
Bakhtin (1981) calls this ‘responsive understanding;” the audience is active, shaping the
discourse by its response to the speaker (p. 280).

Despite the defense of rhetoric as a dialogue, public relations, or corporate
rhetoric, is frequently disparaged as a manipulative tool used by organizations to control
their environments (Stauber & Rampton, 1995). The term ‘spin doctor,” for example, is
intended to reproach public relations practitioners who advocate their clients’ positions
by ‘spinning” or presenting information in a manner that puts their clients in the best
light (Dilenschneider, 1998; Sumpter & Tankard, 1994). This ‘spin” is viewed as
unethical because it emphasizes the organization’s interests to the exclusion of others (Grunig & Grunig, 1990).

Certainly, public relations and rhetoric can be used unethically, however, both are valuable tools for ethical communication as well. As Augustine argued to the early Christians in his attempts to persuade the church that rhetoric should be used by Christian as well as secular communities, the tools of persuasion can be used for reputable purposes (Augustine & Robertson, 1958). In a more modern text, Miller (1989) also argues that persuasion can be “ethically defensible” and equates ethically valid public relations with ethical persuasion. Placing moral value on the tools of persuasion is counterproductive; ethical consideration should come from how the tools are used.

**Rhetorical Models and Public Relations Communication**

Aristotle was concerned with teaching aspiring speakers to make effective speeches. To help his students understand principles of argumentation, he classified types of speeches and outlined their defining elements. He then defined the arguments that should be employed to make the different types of speeches most effective. Aristotle divided rhetoric into three categories—deliberative (or political), forensic (or legal), and epideictic (or ceremonial)—defined not only by the speaker and the situation, but also in large part by what was expected of the audience (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991).

Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making – speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer that determines the speech’s end and object. The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer. A member of the assembly decides about future events, a juryman about past events: while those who merely decide on the orator’s skill are observers. From this it follows that there are three divisions of oratory – (1) political, (2) forensic, and (3) the ceremonial oratory of display (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991).
According to Aristotle, the question a speaker should ask when determining which speech genre to use is: *What is the audience being asked to do?*

This emphasis on audience is noteworthy; as will be discussed later in this chapter, despite embracing rhetorical theory as a foundation for public relations research, public relations theorists have largely neglected the importance of the audience’s or public’s role in rhetorical communication. The following discussion illustrates the linkages between Aristotle’s divisions of rhetoric and modern-day public relations.

Though Aristotle lived in a technologically simpler time and in a much more homogeneous society than we do today, his divisions of rhetoric have useful implications for the study of organizational communication (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991).

**Political/Deliberative**

The audience for political or deliberative rhetoric is being asked to decide ‘to do or not do something’ (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991). The orator ‘aims at establishing the expediency or harmfulness of a proposed course of action’ (p. 32). Political, or deliberative speech can be likened to an organization’s lobbying efforts or communication regarding public policy. For example, consumer groups often lobby state and national legislatures to pass consumer safety laws. The audience, legislators and policy-makers, judge the merits of the groups’ proposals and make decisions about future law and policy. Another example of deliberative rhetoric might be a corporation addressing its board of directors or stockholders regarding future capital expenditures. Again, the audience must judge the rhetor’s arguments and make decisions regarding the future of the organization. The audience is an active body, making decisions in which the speaker’s arguments are factors.
**Forensic**

The audience of a forensic speech is being asked to judge the justice or injustice of some act. The orator “either attacks or defends somebody” (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991). Crisis management is an example of forensic rhetoric. In a crisis, organizations must defend their actions to the publics affected by the situation. Much as in a court of law, the audience will judge the organization on how well it communicates during and after the crisis. Currently, the accounting firm Arthur Anderson is facing a public relations crisis requiring forensic public relations. The company allegedly had an integral role in the Enron collapse, then shredded important documents subpoenaed by the government. Not only must the company face legal questions (true forensic rhetoric), its reputation is also on trial in the “court of public opinion.” The public will judge the organization based on the messages defending their actions, comparing them to messages censuring the company. If the public finds the organization guilty, they will “sentence” it to various individual and/or collective censures based largely on how well the organization communicates. Individually, audience members may decide to boycott Arthur Anderson (their client base has dropped dramatically and they are on the verge of collapse). Collectively, the audience may lobby government for tighter restrictions on the accounting profession (having implications for companies other than Arthur Anderson).

**Epideictic/Ceremonial**

The audience in epideictic discourse, according to Aristotle, observes rhetorical display and is being asked to judge the speaker, not the subject of the speech. As Aristotle explains, the subject of the speech is not a controversy on which the audience must
decide, but rather, the audience must consider the skill of the speaker (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991).

Corporations use epideictic rhetoric in many ways. Hoover (1997) identifies epideictic public relations in an organization’s attempts to create an image. Using logos, slogans, visual images, and other forms of symbolic communication, an organization communicates what Burke would call its identity, (“its uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unit having its own particular structure” (Burke, 1950, p. 21)), to establish a place in the public’s consciousness. The audience, in judging the speaker, must determine if the organization created an identity or an image with which it can identify. But, simply creating an image is not the ultimate end; the message, as a tool of persuasion, must evoke a response. Perelman explains:

The orator’s aim in the epideictic genre is not just to gain a passive adherence from his audience but to provoke the action wished for or, at least, to awaken a disposition so to act. This is achieved by forming a community of minds, which Kenneth Burke, who is well aware of the importance of this genre, calls identification (1979, p. 7).

As with all rhetoric, the intent is to motivate people to think or act in a way prescribed through the persuasive message (Perelman, 1979).

Multi-Purpose Messages

While Perelman distinguishes among deliberative, forensic and epideictic rhetoric, he warns such differentiation is artificial. He writes, “Mark Antony’s famous speech in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar opens with a funeral eulogy, a typical case of epideictic discourse, and ends by provoking a riot that is clearly political” (Perelman, 1979, p. 7). Similarly, an organization’s public relations efforts may embody one or more divisions of speech. Arthur Anderson may practice forensic rhetoric, defending its actions
to the public; address policy issues for the future (deliberative/political rhetoric) as it tries to garner support from various publics; and attend to its tarnished identity through epideictic displays.

In another example, several oil companies, plagued by press accounts of oil spills and environmental damage, have created image advertisements espousing their environmentally friendly deeds. Such advertising addresses past sins (forensic), attempts to restore image (epideictic), and can have implications on future policy and regulation (deliberative) if key publics believe the companies are self-regulating.

**Expanding the Epideictic Model**

While the divisions of rhetoric may overlap (as when a single message serves several different purposes), they are a useful starting point in understanding the goals of organizational communication and the roles of speaker and audience. Understanding the purposes of epideictic is especially important to this study, which focuses on epideictic public relations, a company’s involvement in social issues. Condit’s (1985) work, in which she elaborates on the role of audience in epideictic rhetoric, is particularly valuable in facilitating our understanding of the use and value of epideictic public relations. In her study of the Boston Massacre orations, Condit provides a framework from which to look at how epideictic rhetoric functions in society, serving the needs of both the audience and the speaker. She examines three scholarly perspectives on epideictic rhetoric: (1) message-centered studies which define epideictic speech by its content—praise or blame; (2) speaker-centered studies, that focus on the speaker’s purpose or eloquence; and (3) audience-centered studies which focus on the judgment performed by the audience. In this review of the literature, Condit (1985) notes that definitions of epideictic rhetoric
tend to be incomplete because they fail to include all three parts—the message, the speaker, and the audience. To resolve this disparity, she identifies three ‘functional pairs’ of epideictic use in society based on the speaker role and the corresponding audience role: definition and understanding; shaping and sharing community; and display and entertainment.

**Definition and Understanding**

According to Condit, one function of epideictic speech is for the speaker to define or explain the world or explain a troubling issue. The audience seeks and invites speech that elucidates disturbing or confusing occurrences. In this function, speech provides a sense of comfort to the audience, and the power to define gives power to the speaker.

**Shaping and Sharing Community**

In the second functional pair, the speaker role is similar to that in definition and understanding in that s/he is defining community. The speaker “expresses and reformulates a shared heritage” and has the power to define significant shared experiences. The audience, as a community, says Condit, “renews its conception of itself and of what is good by explaining what it has previously held to be good and by working through the relationships of those past values and beliefs to new situations” (Condit, 1985, p. 289).

Echoing Condit, Hoover (1997) notes, “In the form of epideictic rhetoric, advocacy functions to attempt to create a ‘corporate ethos’ (or credibility) and a ‘specific reality’ for audience members to achieve ‘identification’ between the organization and the publics” (Hoover, 1997, p. 4). Hoover’s ‘specific reality’ is comparable to the
shaping of community or defining experience, but is limited to the relationships between the organization and its publics. Condit’s definition of epideictic seems to be broader in context of its societal function in that the specific reality and identification go beyond the connection of publics and organization, to the community (of which the organization is a part) as a whole. This is a particularly important distinction when companies become involved in social issues that extend beyond the public-organization relationship.

**Display and Entertainment**

The speaker in the display and entertainment function of epideictic rhetoric displays eloquence (truth, beauty and power in speech), and can be creative, released from concern of specific issues and taking on broader perspectives. The audience judges the display of the speaker if the speaker uses eloquence as a means of promotion (Condit, 1985).

As Condit (1985) explains, these functions are not mutually exclusive; epideictic speech may fall into more than one functional category. In fact, Condit says: “The most complete or ‘paradigmatic’ epideictic is that which features all three elements [functional pairs].” She labels such a complete form of communication “communal definition” (p. 291).

In addition, Condit notes several recurring elements in each of the functional pairs; these, too can be useful in terms of understanding public relations communication. First, epideictic communication usually incorporates colorful style. The power of the shared experience is ensured, not simply by clear and rational argument, but by vivid display. This suggests use of relevant examples, amplification of specific ideas and
values, and emotional appeals can be effective tools in epideictic public relations.

Second, many epideictic speeches focus on the appraisal of events, persons or objects (praise and blame), as noted by the message-centered theorists. What must be noted, however, is that unlike blame in the forensic/judicial sense, praise and blame here reinforces community values without controversy. Non-controversiality is the third recurring element cited by Condit. Epideictic messages do not alienate any portion of the audience. If an action is urged, it does not encourage divisiveness. Fourth, epideictic messages include universal values. The community’s sense of identity is derived from shared values and symbols (Condit, 1985). An organization may use colorful style, appraisal of events, non-controversial messages, and shared values to construct a sense of shared community with its publics.

**Recognizing the Audience as Active Participants in Communication**

The part played by the audience in rhetoric is crucially important, because all argumentation in aiming to persuade, must be adapted to the audience and, hence based on beliefs accepted by the audience with such conviction that the rest of the discourse can be securely based upon it (Perelman, 1979, p. 14).

As noted in the previous discussion, a rhetorical approach to public relations research emphasizes an understanding of the organization as rhetor, the divisions of rhetoric (message types) and the corresponding roles of audiences. Heath (1992) suggests the corporate speaker must be particularly cognizant of the ‘images or opinion participants in the event have of the sources, and the opinion environment surrounding each statement’ (p. 25). The opinion environment, that is, the specific public or audience, ‘influence[s] which facts and arguments are relevant’ and constrains the message. Heath observes, ‘Through rhetoric, individuals and organizations negotiate their relationships.'
To do so, they form opinions of one another, decide on action, set limits, and express obligations that influence how each is to act toward the other” (p. 18). Despite this theoretical emphasis on the audience or publics, public relations research has primarily examined questions related to the speaker and the message; it has rarely involved an active public, more typically treating it conceptually as comprised of passive receivers.

“[T]he research direction of rhetorical studies of public relations seems firmly committed to basing rhetorical analyses of organizational speech on mass media accounts” (Toth, 1992, p. 6). Research into the active role played by publics and the social values and norms that form the basis for effective public relations rhetoric can reinvigorate public relations research.

The concept of the audience as an active public has a strong tradition in mass communication and cultural studies literature, creating a distinct division between effects-based research (that emphasizes how media affect people) and reception studies (that emphasize what people do with communication). Cultural studies scholars in both the British and American traditions challenged the dominant, effects-based paradigm, arguing that communication is not simply message dissemination (what Carey (1975) identifies as the transmission model), but is a complex, on-going cultural process of making meaning (Carey, 1975; see also, e.g., Fiske, 1986; Hall, 1980; Newcomb, 1984).

A ritual view of communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs. (Carey, 1975, p. 6)

Newcomb (1984) draws upon Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of the heteroglossia of language to explain the interpretive nature of mass-mediated messages:
Language (communication) is both material and social. It is therefore mutable. Makers and users, writers and readers, senders and receivers can do things with communication that are unintended, unplanned for, indeed, unwished for. (p. 38)

Likewise, Hall (1980) contends communication is a constant negotiation between the sender, who encodes the text, that is, inscribes meaning into the text, and the receiver, who decodes, or constructs meaning from the text. The preferred meaning is the dominant hegemonic meaning constructed by the sender which can be accepted, negotiated, or opposed by the receiver. According to Hall, then, research that is solely text-based fails to acknowledge audience involvement in constructing meaning.

Fiske (1987) notes that the ability to decode and make meaning from text is empowering, allowing people to resist a dominant ideology. But, how much power an audience may have is the subject of some debate. The British tradition of cultural studies differs from the American version in its emphasis on hegemony, the perpetuation of a political social structure and power relationships through communication (Acosta-Alzuru, 1999). That is, according to scholars influenced by British cultural studies, while texts may be polysemic (that is, have multiple meanings), the meanings derived from them are limited by social constraints (Fiske, 1986; Condit, 1989). While Fiske believes audience members are empowered by their ability to construct their own meanings from texts, that decoding occurs within a “network of power relations,” and so, is limited:

The structure of meanings in a text is a miniaturization of the structure of subcultures in society—both exist in a network of power relations, and the textual struggle for meaning is the precise equivalent of the social struggle for power. (1987, p. 392)

Condit (1989), too, warns against overstating the audience’s power, and urges researchers to consider the audience as variable and part of the whole communication process:
The audience’s variability is a consequence of the fact that humans, in their inherent character as audiences, are inevitably situated in a communication system, of which they are a part, and hence have some influence within, but by which they are also influenced. (p. 120)

This communication-as-social-process approach to studying the audience is characteristic of reception studies, which place the audience within a larger social context\(^{11}\) (Vargas, 1995). For example, Radway’s (1984) study of women and romance novels emphasized not only readers’ interpretations of the text, but also how they read it and what meaning they gave to the act of reading. In a more recent study, Duke and Kreshel (1998) interviewed teenage girls about their use of teen magazines, exploring how the girls’ interpretations of the magazine text constructed notions of femininity. Acosta-Alzuru (1999) used textual analysis and in-depth interviews to study the American Girl dolls and their meanings for the girls who owned them. She placed the study within the context of the circuit of culture\(^{12}\) (du Gay et al., 1997; Johnson, 1986/87) examining three of the five points on the circuit—representation, identity, and consumption (Acosta-Alzuru, 1999). And Vargas (1995) conducted an ethnographic study of ‘participatory’ radio stations in southern Mexico to explore audience’s social use of the stations. Inherent in these studies is the premise that communication and audiences exist within a complex social structure, and as such must be studied within that structure.

\(^{11}\) In contrast to more positivistic audience research approaches like uses and gratifications research that focus on the individual as the unit of analysis.

\(^{12}\) du Gay et. al. (1997) expanded upon Johnson’s (1986/87) original four points in the circuit of culture to study the Sony Walkman as a cultural product. The five points, or moments, include: representation, identity, consumption, production, and regulation. Each moment is interdependent of the other moments. The circuit demonstrates the complexity of the cultural process and offers researchers a way to construct studies to include all or parts of the process, while recognizing the entire circuit.
Framing public relations research within a larger cultural context is the natural progression of inquiry in the field. Much as cultural studies scholars began to conduct audience studies to explore an aspect of the communication process unaddressed by textual analyses (Fiske, 1986), rhetorical public relations scholars can contribute to the theoretical depth of the discipline by moving beyond a concentration on messages and speakers (Toth, 1992) and embracing the more complex environment in which public relations is practiced. Public relations messages, as persuasive communication, have a preferred interpretation, however, publics may interpret those messages in other ways—perhaps opposing the desired reading or negotiating the meanings they derive.

**Epideictic Rhetoric and Cause-Related Corporate Outreach**

Campaigns involving corporate social responsibility or cause-related corporate outreach may be categorized within the epideictic model. The audience observes the message, but does not judge or make policy based on the message; the audience judges the organization (speaker), not the subject of the message. For example, American Express has had several campaigns since its ground-breaking Statue of Liberty restoration effort, including Charge Against Hunger to raise money for an anti-hunger organization (Sagawa & Segal, 2000), and Charge for the Cure to raise money for breast cancer (Ebenkamp & Stark, 1999). These charitable programs are non-controversial; the audience does not judge or make policy (except by choosing to accept where money goes if they participate), but rather judges the organization based on its involvement in the causes.
Critics of organizations that employ epideictic communication through cause-related outreach programs argue that such efforts are less than altruistic. In many instances this may be true. For example, oft-prosecuted tobacco companies run television commercials extolling corporate involvement in unrelated social issues. Perelman (1979) argues that employing epideictic in this way is intended to increase adherence to values that might later support legislative or judicial arguments. Thus, messages are multi-purpose.

Condit draws upon her functional pairs concept in defending epideictic rhetoric. She says:

To those who emphasize speech as propaganda, the functional pairs orientation suggests that it may indeed be true that speakers mold audiences and public destiny through public speech, but it is equally true that audiences mold speakers and the public destiny as well. The constraints of the audience’s needs, its willingness to call for a speaker and to listen, its demands that the orator speak for all the people and use the people’s values and heritage place powerful limits on how far the speaker can take the audience, and how events can be explained (1985, p. 297).

In other words, organizations that use epideictic rhetoric as a way to bolster other communication functions must adhere to their publics’ expectations and needs, or they will alienate their communities. Current research on cause-related corporate outreach suggests that targeted publics do, indeed, evaluate the organization based on cause-related corporate outreach efforts (Webb & Mohr, 1999; Barone, Miyazaki, Taylor, 2000).

**Avon, Breast Cancer and Epideictic Public Relations**

Avon’s outreach efforts through social marketing are examples of epideictic corporate rhetoric. Avon attempts to establish a “corporate ethos” (Hoover, 1997) by
linking its name to a social cause (breast cancer). Avon tries to “express and reformulate a shared heritage,” defining major shared experiences (Condit, 1985) and creating a “specific reality” (Hoover, 1997) for its audience through the 3-Day Walk experience.

Avon’s link to a primarily female issue is a deliberate effort to address its constituents’ needs and interests. In a 1994 interview, the program director of the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade noted that the success of the Crusade, which began in 1993, is due to how well the cause matches the company’s values. She noted: “We felt the sincere need, almost an imperative, to continue to find ways to give back to the people who have sold our products for 108 years and to the people who have bought them” (Larson, 1994, p. 17).

Creating the image of Avon as a company that “gives back” to its employees and patrons is not the only goal of Avon’s epideictic public relations, that is, of its cause-related corporate outreach. Simply creating the image is not the ultimate objective. An additional objective is to communicate a message that evokes a response, that moves people to think or act in a way prescribed through the persuasive message. Avon, through its outreach efforts, is attempting to motivate an audience to make a significant commitment to raise money, train and participate in the walk. The audience is an essential component in the communication triad of speaker, subject, audience.

**Research Questions**

This study is focused on the Avon 3-Day Walk participants to uncover the meanings derived from the experience of the walk, discover participants’ shared values, and to better understand the sense of participant identification with the company and the cause. Central to the study is an understanding that communication sources and receivers exist within a
complex cultural setting and must negotiate meaning within that social arena. Using multiple qualitative methods, I conducted a case study to understand participants’ experience of the Avon 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk, and uncover the meanings constructed by them prior to, during, and following the event.

The research began with the following research questions:

**RQ1:** Do walk participants identify Avon as having “ethos” (or credibility)?

**RQ2:** What is the participants’ lived perception (specific reality) of the event?

**RQ3:** How do participants express their sense of community through participation?

**RQ4:** Do participants identify with Avon? With the breast cancer?

**RQ5:** What value links do participants form between themselves, the company, and the cause?

**RQ6:** What other values are present (for example, values like activism, friends/family, consciousness-raising, etc.)?

The following chapter discusses the multi-method qualitative research design used to answer these questions.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS

Introduction

In the previous chapters I have discussed the growth of cause-related corporate outreach as a public relations activity. Establishing rhetorical theory as a logical foundation from which to study public relations, and adopting a cultural studies perspective, I have argued that understanding the audience as an active participant in the social construction of meaning is essential to the study of communication.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to understand how an active audience negotiates the meaning of the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk, an epideictic event in which a corporation goes beyond the bounds of its everyday activities and inserts its voice in a social issue.

In designing this study, I began with the following epistemological and ontological assumptions. First, reality does not exist independent of human perception; Carey (1975) has written: “There is reality and then, after the fact, our accounts of it” (p. 12). As such, there is no single reality—multiple realities are socially constructed and constantly changing (Berger & Luckmann, 1990). In methodological terms, this suggests the necessity of an emic (insider) rather than an etic (researcher) approach. That is, participants’ voices must be privileged, above my own as a researcher, as experts on their 3-Day Walk experiences. Then, too, it suggests the collaborative nature of the research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). “[W]hat we call our data are really our own
constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to…” (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). Thus, in this research, the reality of the 3-Day Walk is constructed by the participants and by me. Recognizing that my subjectivities (as discussed in the prologue), experiences as an observer, and understanding/interpretation of participants’ descriptions of their experiences all would become part of the data, I began by reflecting upon my own subjectivities and bracketing my preconceived notions (Kasper, 1994) about the Walk, breast cancer, participants, and corporate involvement in social issues.

Second, we exist within a complex social world; through communication, human beings collectively create, alter, and rebuild meaningful, symbolic worlds (Carey, 1975). “Believing…man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,” Geertz (1973) writes, “I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (p. 5). As Geertz suggests, viewing human beings as defining and being defined by their cultural webs has important methodological consequences. The goal of research is not statistical generalizability, but depth of understanding. This understanding comes from viewing a social phenomenon in all its complexity: meaning cannot be attained for a whole simply by looking at its parts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 216), nor can the phenomenon be isolated from the world in which it is experienced. “If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens…is to divorce it from its application and render it vacant” (Geertz, 1973, p. 18).
A Qualitative Case Study Approach

This dissertation develops as a qualitative case study. It is, in Stake’s (1995) typology, instrumental, in that it is not merely of intrinsic interest, but explores and then interprets participant experiences with a goal of better understanding the complexities of audience-organization-cause relationships. The first design decision I made was to define the parameters of the case (Stake, 1995). Prior to arriving at the study design, I had conducted pilot interviews with five walkers who had participated in earlier 3-Day Walks. I also attended the closing ceremony of the 2000 Atlanta Walk as an observer, and scanned the environment about issues related to the 3-Day (Kasper, 1994; Oakley, 1981). I read Avon 3-Day literature (e.g. newsletters, postcards, email), subscribed to two 3-Day email listservs, read online bulletin boards, and read national, regional, and local newspaper and magazine articles on the Avon 3-Day, breast cancer and health-related fundraisers, and other extreme events similar to the 3-Day.¹³

As a result of this ‘immersion,” I developed an understanding of the 3-Day as much more than a weekend event, that is, as much more than the Walk itself. The Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk begins for participants when they decide to walk, and continues well beyond the closing ceremony.

Armed with this insight, grounded by the epistemological and ontological assumptions discussed above, and informed by principles of good qualitative research as described by feminist scholars (Kasper, 1994; Oakley, 1981), I designed a study which captured the complex 3-Day experience. I believed it to be essential that participants take the lead, that they be free to articulate what the 3-Day experience meant to them, in their

¹³ This environmental scanning continued throughout the study.
own words. As a researcher, to understand the experience was to listen to what participants revealed (Kasper, 1994). My methodological choices reflected this belief.

I used a variety of methods so participants could talk about the experience as it was happening, that is, before, during and after the Walk. In in-depth interviews prior to the Walk, participants shared their motivations, concerns, expectations, relationships with breast cancer, etc. I found that developing rapport with participants was never a problem; all willingly shared personal information, stories, and feelings about the Walk and related topics. Audio-taped journals kept by participants during the Walk provided “real time” narratives. Through my participation in the Walk as a crew member, I constructed my own understanding of the Walk, and in a very literal sense, helped to create the 3-Day experience. And, in focus groups following the Walk, participants reflected on the experience in interaction.

These methods, taken together, recovered the complex and remarkable story of the Avon 3-Day experience. In the following sections, I discuss each of the methods in greater detail.

**In-depth Interviews**

As noted, I discovered in pilot interviews that, for participants, the Walk began well before Day 1 of the 3-Day. Their consideration about whether or not to walk; their decision to register; frequently, a months-long process of training and raising money; the 3-Day Walk itself; and finally, post-Walk reflections are all a part of the Walk experience. In-depth interviews conducted a month prior to the Walk were designed to discover how participants decided to become involved in the extreme event, their

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14 The instruments used were approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board.
experiences during months of preparation, their relationships to breast cancer, including the nature of their commitment to the cause and the event, and their expectations as the 3-Day approached. In short, I was interested in what the Walk meant to them at this point in the process: What motivated them? What concerned them? How were they feeling?

I used a “snowball” sampling method to create a participant pool. Participants in the Atlanta 2000 Walk who had been a part of my pilot study provided names of people planning to walk in 2001. I recruited two participants from Avon 3-Day email listservs (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/3-day-walk; and http://www.onelist.com/community/Avon3-DayAtlanta), and gathered additional names from friends, co-workers, and acquaintances who knew people training for the Walk.

I interviewed 12 women and one man. (Women make up a majority of Walk participants; only 80 of the 2754 Atlanta 2001 walkers were men.) They ranged in age from late 20s to 50s. Two were African-American, four were breast cancer survivors, and three had participated in a prior Avon 3-Day. (For further information about interviewees, see profiles in Appendix A.) The number of interviews was determined by achievement of redundancy—that is, interviews continued to the point at which no new information was revealed (Kvale, 1996).

I initially contacted participants by telephone and email. Email was the most effective method of contact; there I could explain my interest in interviewing them, and participants could respond at their convenience. I told potential interviewees I was conducting research for my dissertation about the Walk experience. Everyone I contacted was very willing to talk to me, eager to share her/his stories.
I tried to choose settings in which the participants would be comfortable, but did not want to intrude upon them in their homes unless invited. As a result, interview settings varied widely. I met four interviewees at quiet local restaurants/coffee shops, one woman at a restaurant with an outdoor playground so she could let her two small children play while we talked, and three in their offices at work. One woman invited me to interview her and two of her friends at her home, and provided a private room so I could conduct interviews individually. I interviewed two people by telephone, one because of distance and the other because we could not work out a mutually convenient time to meet face-to-face. Most interviews were conducted within the metro Atlanta area, near the homes of participants.

When meeting in a casual setting I wore my Avon 3-Day t-shirt so the participant could identify me easily. Several of the interviewees did the same without prompting from me. Wearing the t-shirt seemingly created an initial bond between me and the interviewees. I described my own involvement in the 3-Day as a crew member, and shared the story of my mother’s breast cancer. This resonated with participants, and prompted them to share their stories. Building rapport was never a problem (Kvale, 1996).

Prior to the interview, each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix B), which provided information about the study and contact information. The form explained that the interview would be taped and transcribed, and that pseudonyms would be used to maintain confidentiality. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The longer interviews were with participants who were walking for a second or third time.
The interviews began with a “grand tour” question (a broad question that allows the interviewee flexibility to answer within the context of her/his experience) (McCracken, 1988): “Tell me about your experience in deciding to participate and prepare for the Avon 3-Day Walk.” After that, the interview was semi-structured. This format had two important advantages. First, although I used an interview guide (see Appendix C), participants had the freedom to carry the discussion in directions they wanted to take. The guide was necessary only to ensure that in the course of the interview we discussed: how and why participants became involved in the Walk; their personal experiences with breast cancer; prior participation in breast cancer or fundraising ‘events’ (e.g. other walks or activities to raise money for health-related or other issues); perceived support from family and friends and the Avon 3-Day; and prior experiences with Avon. Second, this interview design is flexible, iterative, and continuous, not ‘locked in stone’ (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). Rubin and Rubin (1995) define iterative as the analysis of each interview as it is conducted. This leads to the refinement of both the interview in progress and of subsequent interviews; “each iteration focuses more on the core points the interviewees are trying to convey” (p. 44). Not confined by a strict series of questions, I listened to interviewees and adapted the interview (and each successive interview) to reflect emergent findings.

Kasper (1994) notes that participants’ decisions of what to disclose are the first step in data analysis. In this case, conversations frequently drifted beyond the scope of the questions, and participants shared stories that provided an important dimension to the experience (Oakley, 1981; Kasper, 1994). Rubin & Rubin (1995) write, ‘Stories are valuable to interviewers, because they almost always contain some point that the
interviewee feels an urgent need to make stories become subtle ways of communicating or deepening the level of discussion…” (pp. 25-26).

I took careful notes during the interviews, writing my thoughts about each participant and interview, reflecting on meanings and identifying recurring themes. These notes were particularly helpful as I prepared for subsequent interviews, constantly refining questions and themes. I transcribed the tapes as interviews were completed, but after transcribing the first few I hired a transcriber to expedite the process.

**Audio-taped Journals**

The idea of using journals as a data-collection method came to me when a woman I interviewed in the pilot study mentioned she had kept one during the 2000 Walk. I recognized that journals are very personal communication tools, but I believed that if participants were willing to share, the journals could provide a richness and depth beyond that attained even in personal conversation. I realized as well, that I had constructed my own expectations about what participants would be feeling: their anticipation on the eve of the event; their exhaustion, frustration or jubilation in completing the first day; their feelings about getting swept; their emotional journey down the victory walk at the end; and their thoughtful reflection having completed the intense three-day experience. Participants’ journals could reach beyond my constructions and capture the essence of the Walk as expressed by participants in real time.

I was further encouraged to use journals as a data-collection tool after reading Spradley’s (1970) ethnography of urban nomads, *You Owe Yourself a Drunk*. Spradley asked a homeless man to keep a (written) diary of his experiences; excerpts of that diary were used in his book. The diarists’ poignant personal analysis of his experiences, gave
life to Spradley’s observations. In another unique use of journals, David Isay, a radio
documentary producer, created a powerful, award-winning documentary about the
murder of a child based on the audio-taped ruminations of two teenaged boys (“Remorse:
The 14 Stories of Eric Morse,” National Public Radio, 1996). The documentary, thus,
was the boys’ story in their own words.

Thinking through the use of this method, I considered the logistics of a written
journal. Would it stay dry if it rained? Would it get in the way and be a burden? Would
walkers have time/take time to write? Would I be able to decipher handwriting?

Having participants carry micro-cassette tape recorders to record their thoughts
seemed to offer the solution. The recorders took up minimal space in the walkers’ gear
and were easily stowed in fanny-packs during the Walk. Participants could talk at their
leisure, independent of light conditions or a place to write. Tapes eliminated the need to
decipher handwriting idiosyncrasies and could easily be transcribed.

I asked eight participants from the initial interview pool to keep personal journals
during the Walk. Participants varied in their age, race, gender (the one man I interviewed
agreed to keep a journal), number of Walks, and relationships to breast cancer. Six
journals were completed. (Interviewees who kept journals are noted in the profiles
section, Appendix A).

I asked each journaler to sign a consent form that explained their participation in
the study (see Appendix B). The week before the Walk, I mailed each journal-keeper a
package that included: consent forms, general guidelines, a tape-recorder, and extra
batteries and tapes to use if necessary. I also included plastic baggies for participants to
keep the recorder and spare equipment dry in their camping gear, postage for returning
the package with completed journals after the Walk, and a disposable camera as a thank you for participating in the study.

I gave participants only the most basic instructions and guidelines/suggestions for keeping their journals (see Appendix D), asking them to make entries the day before the Walk began and the day after. I hoped participants would talk about their expectations and feelings as the Walk began, their real-time Walk experiences, and their feelings as they completed the 3-Day event. For entries during the Walk, I asked only that they include the day and time of the entry. Otherwise, they were free to talk as frequently, or infrequently, as they wanted, about whatever topics they chose.

Participants returned the journals by mail, within three weeks after the Walk, using the package, a pre-addressed label and the postage I provided. As journals arrived I listened to them and then passed them along to the transcriber.

Most journal-keepers were very straight-forward in their opening and closing reflections, but each took a unique approach to their other entries. Several journalers had tent-mates and walker friends contribute; for them the experience was a shared one. One woman taped herself and her friends as they were interviewed for a local radio program on their way to the Walk. I was delighted to hear another woman “interview” people during the Walk, including a small group who traveled with her in a sweep van. Several journals were very pragmatic about the logistics of the event; others gave more personal accounts. Listening to tapes and reading transcripts brought me close to tears, made me laugh aloud, and ultimately, gave me a sense of the Walk I could have obtained in no other way.
**Participant Observation**

*October 6, 2001, 8:00 a.m.: Got up at 5:00 a.m. because I couldn’t bear to sleep in a puddle anymore. I shoved everything in my bag except my sleeping pad, which had begun to soak up water like a sponge. Is this what they mean about the “messiness” of qualitative data? Most of the camp was up early, rained out of their slumber. Ponchos are the fashion for the day. Walkers are boarding busses for transport to start Day 2. Their conversations center on the soggy conditions. A small group near me is complaining until one of them chastised the others, “No whining.” Immediately their conversation changed. Positive. Still, the rain is pouring. (Heidi Edwards, 3-Day journal)*

I was a participant observer in the Atlanta 2001 Walks, no longer merely listening to participant accounts. As a crew member. I became part of the community—the culture—that formed during the 3-Day event.

Prior to deciding to observe as part of the crew I examined the range of observational options—from uninvolved observer to participation as a walker. How much should I participate? If I observed the Walk as a non-participant I would be removed from the emic perspective I was trying to capture. However, observing as a walker might require too much participation, limiting my ability to actually observe (Wolcott, 1999).

But, crew members are also participants in the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk. As part of the crew, I had not raised money. I had not done the training. But, I shared the event with those who had—the walkers—and others who had not—the crew—all of whom were part of that 3-Day community. Now, I realized the Walk as more than a research topic; I was a participant with my own story. I saw what walkers described in their journals and would later talk about in focus groups. I had a shared frame of reference from which to interpret my data.

It is noteworthy that as a crew member, I experienced Avon’s efforts to construct the Walk experience in two ways: I received newsletters and emails and other
communication from Avon that presented a very particular understanding of the Walk; and, I quite literally helped the company ‘set the stage,’ putting Avon’s construction into place. What I heard in interviews and read in brochures, newspaper articles, and other literature, became more ‘real’ to me.

My job during the 3-Day was with the stage crew. Named by our group the ‘Stage Hands,’ this relatively small team—nine of us—helped the professional stage-set-up crew build, light, and set up sound for the main stage in our tent-city, and erect the main arch through which walkers entered camp. We deconstructed the next morning and moved to the next site to repeat the process. Busy with my team in the morning and at night, I had a few breaks during the day to wander around camp, to visit the 3-Day community. I set up tents, cheered as walkers made it in to camp, helped people find medical attention. I directed waterlogged campers to the shuttle for the laundromat and the promise of dry clothes. In quiet times, I wrote extensive field notes in a small notebook and, like journal-keepers, I recorded my thoughts and feelings on a small tape recorder. These notes provided a thick description of my experience (Geertz, 1973). I reconstructed the field notes as soon as possible after the event to fill in gaps and to continue the process of analysis (Wolcott, 1999).

**Focus Groups**

In focus groups, the goal is to let people spark off one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 140).

The Walk is a collective experience—participants spend three days constantly surrounded by other walkers, crew, and volunteers. In focus groups, participants recollected their Walk experiences and shared what the Walk meant to them. They
reflected on their relationships with the company, with the cause, with each other, and with others “outside” the event. This interaction was yet another meaning-making experience for participants.

Morgan (1997) provides general guidelines for focus groups: focus groups involve six to eight “homogenous strangers,” a moderator conducts a semi-structured interview, and three to five groups are typically conducted for each project. These guidelines are flexible within the context of each research design (Morgan, 1997).

In January and February 2002, I conducted three focus groups. The first focus group had four female participants, all in their mid-30s. The 2001 Atlanta 3-Day was their first experience with the Walk and none of them had any personal experience with breast cancer. A woman I interviewed helped recruit these participants from a larger group of Atlanta 3-Day walkers in her area, but she was unable to attend. Another interviewee helped recruit the five women who participated in the second focus group. She and the other four had trained together, sharing much of the experience of the Walk. Three had participated in more than one 3-Day Walk. Four were in their mid-to-late 50s and were breast cancer survivors; the fifth participant was 36. The third focus group consisted of six women and two men recruited from multiple sources, including one of the people I interviewed and the wife of a crew member I met during the 3-Day. This last group was the most diverse: they varied in age (29 to 60); experience (from three walks to one; including one crew member); and exposure to breast cancer (from none, to having a family member with breast cancer, to a breast cancer survivor and her husband).

As was true when arranging interviews, email was very useful in contacting participants and coordinating a time to meet. I scheduled the groups at times and
locations convenient to participants, meeting in the evening at a local library, a participant’s home, and the meeting area of a small restaurant. I did not offer an incentive for participation, but did provide refreshments for each meeting.

Focus groups vary in the degree of structure imposed by the moderator. In this case, I began each focus group by having participants sign a consent form similar to those used in the interviews and journals (see Appendix B), and fill out a short questionnaire of basic demographic information (see Appendix E). As part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to write about why they had become involved in the 3-Day and to identify their “most memorable image” of the experience. I then asked them to share this information with the group as they introduced themselves. Writing the answers ensured the integrity of individual responses. I also believed responses might be useful in stimulating discussion later.

I developed a moderator guide based on themes that arose in preliminary analysis of the interviews and journals, but, as was true in interviews, the guide provided only basic topic areas; participants guided the discussion with limited direction from me (see Appendix E for moderator guide). I used two tape recorders to tape the discussion in case the sound did not carry, or I had technical difficulties. My participation in the Walk as part of the crew created a bond between focus group participants and me. They realized that I, too, awoke to a rain-drenched sleeping bag, showered in tractor-trailers, and experienced the emotional closing ceremony. Initially, I worried that while this shared experience would encourage rapport, it might impede constructive conversation; that is, things might be considered “understood” and thus, left unspoken. But, participants seemed to accept my dual roles as researcher and participant, telling stories as if I had not
been there. In addition, I asked them to elaborate on their comments if I thought there was more to be told. Groups met for about an hour and a half. I took notes during the meetings and had the tapes transcribed as each focus group was completed.

Focus groups added yet another dimension to the data collected through interviews, journals, and observation, a dimension that comes from individual recollections, and reflections shared. In this process, the meaning ascribed to the Walk experience by each participant is elaborated and transformed. Three months after the Walk, we had all had time to reflect on our participation. Our frames of reference were different, as were our constructions of the 3-Day reality.

**Recovering Meaning Through Analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data is an interpretive but rigorous process that requires immersion in the data and time for findings to emerge. Data analysis was a continuous process; each interview, each phase of data collection built upon the next. I used a reverse hierarchical approach to qualitative data analysis: a five-stage technique that moves from an individual interpretation to a larger theoretical framework. Thus, an emic perspective is guaranteed (Kasper, 1994).

The first stage of the analysis was undertaken by participants; they chose what to reveal in the interviews, journals, and focus groups (even I did this in my observations). Next, I read and re-read the individual transcripts, identifying facts and meanings as revealed by the participants (Kasper, 1994). Transcripts from the interviews, journals, observation field notes, and focus groups represented a significant, if not overwhelming amount of data. To ease the analysis process after the initial reading, I used a qualitative data analysis program (NUDIST 5) into which I imported the text of the transcripts.
created three project files, one for each set of transcripts—interviews, journals, and focus groups.

After reading each transcript several times, I began the third level of analysis; interview by interview I systematically created nodes of information within the data analysis program, looking for relationships between the facts and meanings identified in stage two, and extracting quotes from each interview into nodes (Kasper, 1994). For example, the first interviewee talked about her experience with breast cancer, which, until her participation had been limited. I created a node for breast cancer relationships. Later in the interview she mentioned that she was a breast cancer activist, and I created another node for activism. As I looked at these quotes together with other statements she made, I identified a link between her participation in the Walk and her breast cancer activism. I created a node branching from activism to describe the meaning I gave to this link (Kasper, 1994).

In the fourth stage of data analysis I identified links between individual relationships and the collective data (Kasper, 1994). For example, I found other expressions of activism and breast cancer experiences which ascribed more, and sometimes different meaning to the original nodes. I then outlined concepts, issues, and links expressed in each data set. At this point I looked at the data in their entirety, linking ideas and meanings from interviews, journals, and focus groups, and adding my own field notes. This was a painstaking process, messy, but systematic and rigorous. Finally, as I began the fifth stage of data analysis, stepping back from the outline, but continuing to read and immerse myself in the reams of information, I began to see the larger patterns that became the themes discussed in Chapter Six (Kasper, 1994).
I asked two participants to review my interpretations, completing the analysis. Did my interpretations resonate with them? Had I captured their experience? I used their comments to revise the findings. Their suggestions clarified some of my interpretations, but did not necessitate substantial changes to the findings.

In sum, I crafted this research design to capture the complexity of the Walk experience. The methods privileged the participants as experts, yet I recognized my own agency in ‘creating’ the data; from data collection to analysis this was a collaborative project between the participants and me. This triangulation of methods recovered meaning in complementary ways, and allowed me to view the experience in all its complexity, increasing the trustworthiness of findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The following two chapters detail the findings. Chapter Five is my participant observations; Chapter Six integrates my observations with interview, journal, and focus group data to tell the story of the 3-Day experience.
CHAPTER FIVE

OBSERVATIONS FROM WITHIN THE 3-DAY

The holding pen is fun…to be greeted by everybody as you come in, you come down this long stretch and the people on both sides are clapping and they are high-fiving and they are cheering and yelling and it is just a festival and a celebration. A celebration of completing something that, in a lot of years, in a lot of people's mind, they weren't sure if they could do… (Linda, 2001 Atlanta Avon 3-Day walker, describing the end of the Walk).

Piedmont Park, Atlanta…

The October afternoon is sunny and surprisingly warm after a chilly morning. More than 2,500 people, mostly women, line up for their grand entrance into a celebration marking the end of a three-day, 60-mile trek from Lake Lanier to Piedmont Park, an emotionally and physically challenging journey. Walking. Limping. A few struggling on crutches. With smiles, laughter, and tears, the walkers have persevered through rain, soaked camping gear, and cold overnight temperatures. They have raised five million dollars for breast cancer detection, treatment, and research. Weary, but excited, walkers rejoice in their accomplishments even as their blistered feet bear the burden of three days of solid walking. Cheers and applause that will last for almost 30 minutes erupt from the thousands of spectators—well-wishers, friends, family, folks who are interested or just happened to be in the park—as the first walkers enter.

Balloons and banners are scattered throughout the crowd. A man at the edge of the staging area holds a sign: “Way to go Susan! I love you!” In his other arm he holds a blond little boy, a toddler. After a few moments the man turns the sign; tiny handprints
surround the words, “I’m proud of you! I love you, Mommy!” The little boy claps uncertainly, looking for “Mommy,” seemingly bewildered at all the excitement. The man bounces the little boy as their eyes scan the walkers entering beneath a large banner that declares “Every Mile Made a Difference.” Farther away, up the hill, a woman in a lawn chair holds a large bouquet of pink latex balloons. Beside her chair is a helium tank and a large bag full of ribbons. As walkers pass, she gives them a balloon. “Thank you,” she says.

Music blasts through huge speakers. Walkers in navy blue 3-Day t-shirts lead the procession. Yelling. Clapping. Waving. Some sport balloons, courtesy of the woman with the helium tank. A few grasp flowers, water bottles, or Gatorade. “Stay hydrated.” How many times had they heard that? A woman in a red t-shirt mingles with the walkers, eyes scanning in case there should be a help signal (forearms crossed, clenched in fists raised high into the air). Medical crew, still on alert for dehydrated, exhausted walkers. Make-up-free faces look tired but happy. Two women stand side-by-side, arms linked, swaying back and forth, waving. One has a shoe in her hand, her foot wrapped with gauze and tape, the swelling evident below the dressing. A tall man waving a soggy towel, hair flattened with sweat against his head, hugs his teammates as they join the procession.

One group carries a large American flag, a now-familiar gesture of patriotism; it is less than a month since 9/11. All weekend, red, white, and blue mixed with pink, a co mingling of symbols rich with meaning. At least one team of walkers coordinated what they would wear to walk Saturday—red, white, and blue—and word spread through camp Friday night. On Saturday morning, several hundred participants had somehow assembled appropriately colored attire or accessories, joining the patriotic display. The
bond of nationalism gains momentum in the holding area Sunday afternoon as walkers are informed that the US has begun retaliatory attacks on Afghanistan. But the purpose and meaning of the Walk remain at the forefront.

And now, the survivors enter to even louder cheers.

Clad in pink survivor t-shirts, these walkers fill the space left in the center of the other walkers, most of whom are now shoeless, raising their walk-worn sneakers in the air in tribute to survivors. The procession of pink is diverse. A white-haired man. A bald woman. A woman with a thin, metal prosthetic leg. Young and old. Suddenly, the blond little boy in his father’s arms begins clapping, all hesitancy gone now as he bounces up and down, yelling, “Mommy, Mommy, Mommy!” Across the crowd, a young woman in a pink shirt spots them and waves, tears streaming down her smiling face, her pony tail bouncing as she tries to maintain eye contact with her personal cheering section.

Then, a small, empty circle of survivors symbolizing those who have died of breast cancer slowly makes its way to join the other survivors. Tears are flowing freely now, amid smiles, laughter, and cheers. Finally, the volunteer crew joins the walkers. A 500-person troop—most in white shirts, the medical crew in red—makes its way through the middle of the crowd. The 3-Day community is now complete.

I am in white. No makeup. Hair in a pony-tail. I watch in awe as the ceremony comes together. The well-orchestrated formation seems so right. I am right up front on the platform holding the crew. I am surrounded by the rest of the “Stage Hands,”” my crew team. As speeches begin, I sit down at the edge of the stage. Front row, center.

Short speeches by survivors and event organizers are rich with praise and encouragement. Continue to fight for the cause. A survivor tells of her determination to
walk in every 3-Day event in 2001; Atlanta is another one down, bring on New York.

Dan Pallotta, whose company, Pallotta Teamworks produces the 3-Days is inspiring as he talks about the power of the individual. Though his address is well-rehearsed, a testimonial to his commitment to social causes and individual empowerment, I see tears glisten in his eyes. Is this part of the orchestration? He does it well. His words gain momentum and end with a benediction of sorts: go forth to spread the word about breast cancer, kindness, and the 3-Day experience. And, perhaps, to walk in another 3-Day.

As the celebration ends, boundaries, perhaps artificial to begin with, blur. Navy blue, pink, white and red mix with the colorful apparel of family and friends. Participants hug, exchange addresses, introduce families to newfound friends. Signs and balloons are markers as walkers seek loved ones among the throng. A woman, talking to the man next to her, still holds her shoes. “I just can’t put them back on.” He nods, patiently walking beside her as she gingerly makes her way to reclaim her gear. Like other men and women around him helping walkers, he hefts her bag and leads her to a waiting car. Whisking her home for a hot bath and comfortable slippers? The park slowly empties. Another Atlanta 3-Day adventure celebrated.

As I drive home I reflect on my own experience of the 3-Day, listening to my journal. I am reconstructing the first night when I felt the community come together. The community I see through my notes is a functional city—a small town with people working to maintain its structure.

Day 1 is nearing its end. The rock and roll band is loud under the main tent. The lead singer calls for campers to join in the dance. About 20 walkers, refreshed from hot showers and warm meals dance to the beat. Around them, participants stand or sit,
sipping coffee, talking, listening to the music. A couple hundred join in the evening’s entertainment.

The rest of the stage crew and I take turns—“on call” in case a microphone goes out or the spotlight is needed. We will spring into full action when the show ends, striking the stage except for equipment needed tomorrow morning. Until then, it is my turn to take a break—time to explore the now fully-occupied camp in the dwindling light.

The concierge tent is quiet, a table of Avon products in a corner. Two crew members sit behind another table. A bulletin board holds messages for walkers. One tent down, a medical crew person questions a walker who stands on one foot, the other lifted gingerly, her toes brushing the ground, apparently suffering from a severe blister. She is at the end of a short line. Earlier today the line stretched snake-like out the tent door.

I see a member of my team in the massage tent. Like me, she is taking a break. The massage therapist is concentrating on her shoulder—a pulled muscle from this morning’s stage and arch construction.

As I turn to enter the “residential” section of camp—row upon row of blue, two-person tents—an older woman with slightly damp gray hair says, “Thank you, Crew,” and hands me a plastic baggie. Inside is a note: “Hugs and kisses for all you do. Thank you!” and some chocolate hugs and kisses. I am astonished. She is on to the next gift bag recipient as I yell, “Thank you!” What a treat!

Oh, don’t yell, I remind myself. People are sleeping. It is just past 8:30 p.m. now. It is dark, but I can see with camp lights. The city is alive, even as some people sleep. Two women walk by me—one holds a flashlight, sweeping their path. Each carries a towel and plastic baggies of toiletries and a change of clothes. Two other women giggle
as they enter their tent for the night. They can’t get situated, their sleeping bags and gear
crowding them out.

    I have not seen the shower trucks, so I follow the first two women. What a scene!
    Two rows of tractor trailers face each other. Outside each trailer people brush their teeth
in front of large sinks. I see the women who passed me. They sit in plastic chairs
arranged on carpet by the side of a trailer. One already has her shoes off. Tucking them
under a chair, she gathers her toiletries, clothes and towel and enters the trailer as
another woman emerges, steam escaping as the door opens.

    As I turn to go back to my post by the stage, I notice a woman standing on a
chair, brushing her short hair under an outdoor heater. No blow dryer? No problem.

    Back to work, for me. I’ll have time for all that later. Much later.
CHAPTER SIX

THE 3-DAY EXPERIENCE

As I observed, the experience of the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk begins the moment participants decide to register, and extends well after the closing ceremony. As I talked with participants, I came to realize that what began as an intensely personal decision – the decision to walk – became an act of community, of creating a web of relationships that extended well beyond Avon, breast cancer, and the individual walkers. Adelaide\textsuperscript{15} noted that, “[O]ne person can make a difference,” and then went on to articulate a sense of community she was feeling:

...you think that there is nothing you can do, but the power of teaming up with a large group of people – you know the $6000 that I raised combined with all the money that everyone else is raising, is going to make a tremendous difference in breast cancer research and helping low income women get the services they need.

In a sense, the actual Walk is a metaphor, a visible symbol both of the process by which individuals come to understand themselves to be part of a larger 3-Day community of their own making, and of the 3-Day community itself.

Robert E. Park (1934) once asked: “If the study of culture is to reveal what makes life for individuals or peoples either significant and exciting or merely dull, what are the kinds of facts most likely to disclose this vital secret?” His response? “Undoubtedly, the most revealing portions are the candid comments of the peoples studied on their own

\textsuperscript{15} Pseudonyms are used for all participants to protect confidentiality. The pseudonyms are the names of the author’s family members, none of whom participated in the 3-Day or the study.
In this chapter, I rely heavily on the “candid comments” of my participants to tell their story of the 3-Day experience. In short, this is what the 3-Day meant to them.

Avon Guides the Way

Wrapped in symbolism, the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk is painstakingly orchestrated – from beginning to end – by Avon and the event producer, Pallotta Teamworks. In artfully crafted language, they construct a very particular representation of the Walk as physically challenging, emotionally rewarding, an event which past participants insist was “the greatest experience of their lives” (Pallotta Teamworks, 2001, p. 17). Avon and Pallotta (the components of what I will refer to, hereon, as Avon) recruit “mainstream citizens” to accomplish “powerful things” (p. 6). They ask walkers to raise $1900, train to walk 20 miles on three consecutive days, and then participate in the Walk.

It is important, here, to note that while walkers all talked about the “Avon 3-Day,” they did not mention Avon, the company, in interviews, journals, or focus groups until I specifically asked them. At the end of each interview, when they had not mentioned Avon, I asked participants their impressions of the company as the sponsor of the event. They each made a connection between Avon – the “cosmetic company” – and breast cancer – a “women’s issue.” And although many credit Avon for its philanthropy, they recognize the company’s involvement is not purely altruistic. “I am sure they have some kind of belief in it,” said Susan, “but I would think it is a good, positive message to be involved with women and women’s issues.” Sharon connected the company’s history of giving to women’s causes to its current involvement in breast cancer issues, but also made a link to the positive publicity that comes from the event:
Sharon: Avon has been sponsoring women’s events for a long, long time… I use to play competitive golf so I have known that Avon has always been involved in women’s athletics and been a big sponsor of that. But, I think they have probably gotten more press, because they don’t just say the 3Day, they say, oh, you are doing the Avon 3Day… Everybody knows that it is associated with Avon…

I asked focus groups if it would make a difference if another company sponsored the 3-Day. In each group, the initial answer was no – the cause is the motivating factor.

But after discussion, each group came to the conclusion that it just might make a difference – perhaps not in who, specifically, was the sponsor, but in what type of company was the sponsor:

Interviewer: Would it have mattered if it had been another company that had sponsored this event, for your participation and involvement in it?

Lauren: It wouldn’t have mattered to me, no.

Jaime: It would have mattered if they didn’t do a good job.

Elizabeth: Avon is women. Every woman knows about Avon. That is the message sent: Avon is a woman’s company. And everybody probably has bought some Avon. Avon is a supporter of women, so to me that made it a little more meaningful. I don’t know, if Budweiser were to put it on, it wouldn’t be the same.

Other focus groups also identified companies like beverage distributors and car manufacturers whose motives for sponsorship they might question.

Despite this absence of Avon in walkers’ discussions with me, the company name is quite visible on t-shirts, brochures, newsletters, and other 3-Day literature. And, during the Walk, Avon products are readily available for free at the concierge tent, and walkers use Avon soap, shampoo, lotion, deodorant, sunscreen, lip balm, etc. throughout the weekend. The products are utilitarian – no makeup, nail polish, or perfume. Avon is visible, but not obviously commercial. Also of note, Avon did not use the 3-Day
participant mailing list to send sales catalogs. Their commercial presence throughout the experience was understated, while their name and image seemed to be at the forefront.

While they do not send sales catalogs, Avon does mail participants a lot of information. When walkers register, Avon sends them an Avon 3-Day t-shirt and a binder full of materials to help them prepare for the event. Part of the binder is fundraising information: sample letters, suggestions, tips, creative ideas, information about breast cancer. The other part is an introduction to the basics of the Walk – what to expect, how to prepare – and a training guide. The training guide includes a mileage chart, suggestions for how to build up to long distances over several months, and information on nutrition, stretching, equipment, and safety.

Avon re-emphasizes this information in monthly newsletters, which also contain lists of locally organized training walks and inspirational messages from survivors. Walker coaches contact participants by telephone and email, checking their training and fundraising. Evidence that participants relied upon and welcomed this constant flow of information as they prepared for the Walk appeared throughout my conversations with them. Frankie noted that on her long training walks, she “followed every guideline that they had mailed me or put in that brochure.”

Elizabeth: The newsletters we get are just, from the very beginning, just what you need to do...T minus-eight months to go, seven months. It is just constant information of where we need to be, what we need to do, where to get help, who to call, where to buy your shoes. There are massive training walks everywhere throughout Atlanta. And every month they give you all that stuff. So it is just a wealth of information.

This “wealth of information” begins a transformation, as walkers continually reaffirm their commitment to the 3-Day by following the guidelines provided. It gives
each individual walker the same point of reference, despite the fact that each has very personal reasons for taking part in the event.

**Why do walkers walk?**

*There is one thing, and only one thing, that each and every person who’s ever done one of our events, is doing one of our events, or ever will do one of our events has precisely, exactly, and completely in common. It’s not that they’re compassionate, although they are that. It’s not that they’re courageous, although they’re that, too. What everyone and anyone who’s ever done one of our events has in common precisely, exactly, and completely is that they filled out the registration form. They chased down their demons and they moved beyond hesitancy and they declared. “Yes.”* (Pallotta, 2001, pp. 129-130.)

Participants come to the 3-Day with a wide range of individual motivations and expectations, from different places in their lives; for each, the Walk fulfills a personal need. For some, it is a need to fight against a disease that has taken something from them: their own health, a loved one, their self-confidence. Frankie said: “It has given me the opportunity to ‘slay the dragon’…It has given me the opportunity to fight back.” For Frankie and other survivors, the Walk is a way to take action against a disease over which they seemingly have no control. These women speak with determination and a very real sense of agency:

Elizabeth: The thing that motivates me is that I had breast cancer. I know that my chances of getting breast cancer again are certainly increased because I had it once, and I am not going to let that happen. I have a couple of friends that right now are battling breast cancer and they are going to win it and I am going to help them by doing things like this.

Sharon: [In my dream] it was my mom talking to me saying, ‘You don’t have a disease, you have knowledge, and now do something with it.’ And that was the day I decided to do this Walk. Here I have this first hand knowledge [about breast cancer] and I can share it with other people. It is not the end of your life, it is not a death sentence anymore. You can, I can help other people, so I am going to do it.
For others, participation is a way to feel strength; to access inner resources and build self-esteem. Sylvia said she signed up for the Walk as a way to focus on herself, her well-being. It began as a way for her to adopt a healthier lifestyle and lose weight. Through participation in the 3-Day, she could be ‘selfish,’ but with a greater purpose – raising money for breast cancer. The fact that there was a cause legitimated the time she was taking for herself. When asked her reason for walking, Linda also foregrounds motivations of personal satisfaction, and the ‘empowerment’ she gets from taking on the challenge and meeting her goals:

Linda: …by doing something of this nature, it empowers you. You feel good about yourself. You say, ‘Yes, I can do it.’ And I try to take that into a lot of the different things that I do in my life… Each year right before the Walk, I get to the point where… I don’t like my life again and I kind of go through that cycle. And then it is time for the Walk and then I complete that Walk and, boom, I am renewed and refreshed for another year. So in a way I think that is what keeps me coming back to do it each year.

She mentions the breast cancer cause almost as an afterthought. ‘Of course,’” she says, ‘I’m all for it.” Contrary to what we might expect, I found walkers’ motivations to be complex and very personal, originating from many places in their lives. For example, Adria walked to support a survivor friend who was also walking. Katie said she walked because, ‘I was going through a divorce and feeling bad about myself, so I needed to do something to make myself feel better.” Cheri signed up ‘for the camaraderie, friendship.” Susan was inspired to register after attending the closing ceremony the first year. Rachel, a 12-year survivor, said, ‘I thought, this time I will do something to give something back, because I worry about it for my daughters.”

Walkers’ expectations regarding what they would get out of the Walk varied with their motivations: personal empowerment, a sense of activism from working for a cause,
feelings of accomplishment, increased self-confidence. Walkers all had personal, sometimes deeply emotional motivations and expectations, but, it is perhaps not surprising, given the physical demands of the Walk, that the most commonly expressed expectation was physical. They expected fitter bodies. They expected to lose weight. After all, they would be walking and walking and walking and walking. Sylvia lost weight and felt she was in better shape. Walkers frequently acknowledged that after months of training they had increased stamina, built muscle, and generally improved their health. It is ironic that despite their physical achievements, most walkers were disappointed they did not lose weight.

As I listened to walkers describe their experiences, I perceived a subtle shift in how they talked about themselves in the early days of their involvement, and how they talked about themselves after months of training and fundraising, and after having completed the walk. It seemed to me that over time they had constructed a “walker identity” that became more well-defined with each new experience. I tell this part of the story in the sections which follow.

**From “I’m walking” to “I am a 3-Day Walker”**

*[Y]ou don’t have to be young, an athlete, or an expert fundraiser to do it... Sure, you may find an athlete or two zooming by you on the route. But the great sweating masses are just amazing regular people on a mission, determined to make their presence felt... Some have creaky knees, a little bit of a gut, a little bit of a butt, a lot of wrinkles, an historic lack of discipline, a tiny bankbook... mainstream citizens accomplishing unheard-of, powerful things, staring down the impossible. (Pallotta Teamworks catalogue of 2002 events, We The People, 2001, p. 6)*

Initially, participants had viewed themselves merely as individuals “walking in the 3-Day.” In the process of the 3-Day, they became “3-Day walkers” joined in symbolic
community. That is, once merely ‘regular people,’ they became “amazing regular people on a mission.” Assuming this walker identity, they differentiated themselves from those outside the 3-Day community. And Katie’s comment, ‘I mean, if you can’t walk and you can’t crew, you can do your part by giving money,’” illustrates, that at least on occasion walkers differentiated themselves even from those within the community. If you thought in terms of hierarchy, walkers were at the top. They were proud of themselves. They were resilient, powerful, strong, special.

In the words of Pallotta (2001), 3-Day walkers have ‘chased down their demons and they moved beyond hesitancy and they declared, ‘Yes’” (p. 130). While Avon stresses that anyone can take on the challenges of the 3-Day, participants came to feel they were exceptional because they are taking on those challenges. The key element of the walker identity is commitment, a commitment that is the foundation of two additional characteristics which seem to define the walker identity: physical strength and activism.

**Physical Strength**

To complete the 60 miles, walkers knew they had to be in shape. After months and months of training using Avon’s guidelines, they were physically fit. Frankie told a story about walking with her husband, which illustrates both her commitment to being physically prepared for the Walk, and the obvious pride she has in her achievement.

Frankie: [My husband and I] did 20 miles on Saturday and 19 on Sunday. And I followed every guideline that they had emailed me or put in that brochure. I stretched every hour, I made sure every mile I hydrated, things like that. Now he didn’t do the stretching, he stretched before and afterwards. And Monday he got up to go to work and really could not move and I just hopped right out of bed.
Walkers were extremely protective of this aspect of their identity. Elizabeth tells of being incensed when a co-worker suggested to her that the endurance she’d built up over months of training was nothing more than an everyday achievement.

Elizabeth: I had this guy at work that really pissed me off. He said, ‘I can do that.’ And I said, ‘Come out starting Saturday morning, I want to see you.’ …I don’t think people have any idea of what it is like... I mean, I work a five-day week and every morning I was up and on the weekends I was up walking …It is the hardest thing I have ever done, but the best thing I have ever done.

Elizabeth had worked hard, it was ‘the hardest thing [she’d] ever done,’’ and no one was going to take that away from her.

Certainly not all walk participants were able to/willing to train as seriously as the Avon guidelines suggested. This was true of the participants I spoke with as well.

Adria: [T]he training was not to the book, but it was at a pace that [my training partner] and I felt comfortable with and what we could handle and juggle with our families and with the time that we have. And based on [our long walks] last weekend, I think we are real comfortable [with our ability to complete the Walk].

This negotiation of the training guidelines in no way robbed these participants of their walker identity, for they remained committed to meeting the physical demands of the Walk, even if doing so on their own terms. Still, Patta expressed a sort of disdain for those ‘men and younger women’ who thought they were fit and so, did not train hard enough. She told of meeting a man on the Walk who was ‘stooped over, had a pulled hamstring,’’ and was not going to finish the route that day. She had to help him up a hill. ‘He thought he was in good shape,’’ she said. ‘[T]hose of us who don’t think we are in good shape, and are determined to train, end up being the ones who can make it.’ Like Elizabeth, Patta was protective of the walker identity, and even made distinctions among
her fellow walkers. She expected them to follow a pattern of behavior consistent with her image of a ‘3-Day walker.’

**Activism**

3-Day walkers are activists: some *come* to the experience as breast cancer activists, others *become* breast cancer activists, and still others are drawn to the Walk less by breast cancer as a cause than by the desire to ‘make a difference.’ For Frankie, being a 3-Day walker ‘shows people that you are willing to fight for your cause, and that you are dedicated to your cause.’ Likewise, Lauren’s participation was symbolic of her commitment – her relationship – to the disease. She made a distinction between her efforts in the 3-Day and other, less involved fundraisers:

Lauren: [Y]ou are not going to get a $500 check if you walk a 5K. I think after you have confronted breast cancer or have had a family member confront breast cancer, you feel like 60 miles is nothing compared to what I went through with breast cancer.

Elizabeth, a self-described breast cancer activist, uses the Walk to make people more conscious of breast cancer issues:

Elizabeth: I wear a pin that says Avon 3-Day most of the time, all year long. And people are like, ‘What is that?’ And I talk to them about breast cancer, breast cancer awareness, and early detection. I use this as a means of awareness and getting the word out.

For Elizabeth, the pin is a conversation starter, a non-intrusive way to share her story and to advocate breast health. Similarly, Sharon is very vocal about her experience with breast cancer. She said when she wears her 3-Day shirt she will go up to ‘total strangers’ and ask them, ‘Have you had your mammogram?’ She has become almost dogmatic, encouraging women to be vigilant about their health.
Frankie, Lauren, Elizabeth, and Sharon are breast cancer survivors and may have made their commitment to walk *because* they are breast cancer activists. They said they were using the 3-Day as a symbol of their dedication. But Linda, who initially mentioned the breast cancer cause almost tangentially as a motivation, developed a sense of activism for breast cancer through her participation in the 3-Day process:

Linda: And so, it developed maybe into an advocacy...Whenever I talk to women, especially, I talk about what I’m doing and involved in, and...are they doing a mammogram?

For Dixie, Franklin, Adria, Susan, and Sylvia, the experience either satisfied or created a general sense of activism, which is consistent with Pallotta’s philosophy of participation: “*What matters is not which cause you choose, but that you choose at least one, and in so doing, choose the greatest cause of all – the cause of action in service of humanity*” (Pallotta catalog, 2001, p. 1). For these walkers, the Walk did not translate into a personal agenda regarding breast cancer. Their motivations were in the physical challenge and the support of *a* cause, which, in this case, happened to be breast cancer, but might just as easily have been leukemia and lymphoma or AIDS.

Dixie: [C]ertainly the cause had a lot to do with it. I almost did one of the leukemia marathons a couple of years ago and the joke with that was I just decided I didn’t have time to train to walk 26 miles. And of course, now I am walking 60 miles. But I like the idea of not just raising money but actually having to do something physical to sort of show your commitment.

Sylvia, too, was an activist for many causes. She mentioned that she has done other (less involved) walks, like the March of Dimes and Great Strides for cystic fibrosis. She and her husband also discussed becoming involved in Habitat for Humanity. Adria was involved in diabetes charities because her mother had diabetes, while Franklin, who had a child die of sudden infant death syndrome, was active in SIDS charities, and has walked
and run in other charity events. In a focus group, Kristi told how the Walk inspired her and others around her to become more involved in giving back to their community:

Kristi: I think personally...[my involvement in the Walk] has rubbed off...I have family that is going to walk and crew...My husband wants to do something...He signed up for two Saturdays for Habitat [for Humanity]. He said he could tell what a difference [my involvement] made and he wants to be able to do something, too.

**Activism Avon’s Way**

That walkers chose to be part of the 3-Day placed them at the heart of a very specific cause, breast cancer. But, raising money ‘for breast cancer’ is a broad description of how funds are used. The first year Avon sponsored the 3-Day, funds went to breast cancer education and early detection and treatment for economically disadvantaged women. The next year, the 3-Day added research to its goals. Emphasizing these issues, Avon defines how it believes society should confront breast cancer. Through their participation, walkers either overtly or tacitly propagate these ‘solutions’ as appropriate, raising large sums to be applied toward organization-prescribed societal remedies. And by giving, donors do the same.

For most of the walkers, it seemed that how the money was used was important, but it did not determine their decisions to walk. Morgan and Sylvia registered for the Walk and only later found out the areas the funds supported. Linda, a three-time walker, said she was disappointed when Avon added contributions to research to its original 3-Day mandate. Still, it was not enough to stop her from participating. Other walkers I interviewed were mostly first- and second-year participants who seemed to accept research as part of the mix, although they tended to emphasize helping the medically underserved. Sharon said that was one reason she decided to do the Avon Walk:
Sharon: ...the money goes just specifically for those people and research. So that was another driving force for me... to make sure that coffer stays full so that someone down in southeast Atlanta who doesn’t have health insurance can still have the means to have breast surgery.

Elizabeth, a survivor, too, stressed helping patients. She is a nurse working with breast cancer patients, and has an Avon grant to help economically disadvantaged women:

Elizabeth: Because of what I do, I knew of some of the programs that Avon has for patients... they have patient assistance programs that they help people finance stuff... they do a lot of direct patient stuff. So I knew that going into it. So to me that meant a lot more to me because I knew when I was raising money, [the money] was going to go to somebody.

But, she also said the research was important, “so other people don’t have to go through what I went through.” Linda, whose personal experience with breast cancer was limited, adopted Avon’s breast cancer agenda as her own:

Linda: I look at the Walk itself now as being an awareness campaign. That people become physically aware of breast cancer situations and that breast cancer can be stopped through awareness, through your checks [BSE], your screen, your mammogram, that kind of thing.

In sum, the people with whom I talked defined a 3-Day walker identity, and in a sense, came to be defined by that identity. To be a 3-Day walker meant commitment—commitment to training, to achieving the physical capabilities to finish the walk, and commitment to a social activism. This commitment came to symbolize a 3-Day community in which individuals came together with commonly shared interests and goals. The walker identity embodied a complex set of relationships between the individual, the cause, and the Walk itself, such that motivations for participating could not be meaningfully distinguished. “...I like the idea of not just raising money,” Dixie suggested, “but actually having to do something physical to sort of show your
commitment.” Rarely explicitly articulated, this conflation was visible in many aspects of the 3-Day experience as we will see later.

Preventing for the Walk

As noted earlier, the 3-Day experience is painstakingly orchestrated. Information from Avon is carefully constructed and distributed, and many (though certainly not all) participants apparently follow that information closely. It is tempting to think of this communication process from a “transmission” perspective (Carey, 1975), that is, as a situation in which Avon “transmits” pragmatic suggestions for how participants should train and raise funds in an effort to influence their behavior. But, as I suggest here, to do so would ignore the ways in which participants use that information to actively construct their own meanings: sharing stories, rituals, and values. Communication, then, is best understood in terms of Carey’s (1975) ritual model: “communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information, but the representation of shared beliefs” (p. 6). The sections which follow illustrate how participants, using the information provided by Avon regarding training and fundraising, actively create a meaningful community that both defines and is defined by them.

Training

The 3-Day begins as an individual experience. Walkers make a personal decision to walk, and many told me how they started training by walking alone or with a friend a couple of miles a day. Then, following the Avon 3-Day guidelines, their once solitary training expanded to include other walkers.
Adelaide: I can remember being daunted by thinking that I had to walk seven or eight miles. How am I going to do that? ... So I would start out and then go a little longer and ... I met some other people and we all exchanged email addresses. Then this whole email exchange started happening and there were a few of us that decided to make our training a little bit more formal. Instead of just training by ourselves, we would meet... Then the group started growing and growing and before long... there were between 10 and 14 of us who trained together.

Shared walks were a sensible way to train. Here, in the coming together of walkers, was the beginning of a community. In some sense, not yet a community, but a group of people brought together by practical necessity. Other walkers had the same goals: finishing the Walk and raising money. They had the same time frame, they faced the same long training sessions. Walking together, they were more likely to adhere to Avon’s training suggestions, reminding each other to stretch, to hydrate, to wear proper shoes, to be safe.

*Train with other walkers. Meet on the weekend – at the library, at Stone Mountain, wherever. Here’s a list of training walks, Avon advised. Carey (1975) calls our attention to the importance of these everyday activities in the creation and maintenance of culture.*

He notes:

> The activities we collectively call communication—having conversations, giving instructions, imparting knowledge, sharing significant ideas, seeking information, entertaining and being entertained—are so ordinary and mundane that it is difficult for them to arrest our attention. (Carey, 1975, p. 11)

*Bring your water bottle, energy bars, an extra pair of socks. So ordinary and mundane, and yet, in these activities, community is created, for Avon might have added: Bring your stories and a listening ear, and maybe a tissue or two. There’s plenty of time, when you’re walking 7 or 8 or 10 or 15 or 20 miles, to listen and share. And so, training took on new dimensions: storytelling, friendships, and bonding:*
Adelaide: We have so much fun on those [training] walks. We talk about everything under the sun, from recipes to husbands, to you name it—I mean meeting the women from all different walks of life that I would have never come in contact with otherwise has been really amazing. That has been great—the camaraderie that has come out of it...

What had begun as an individual project became a shared one, no longer a community of practical necessity, but one of ritual. Walkers, talking as they walked, shared values, and stories about their lives, the Walk and breast cancer. Two- and three-time walkers shared their experiences, giving advice, telling the first-timers what to expect. And rituals were born:

Adelaide: [W]e walked in the rain one weekend, in the pouring rain and we walked the whole thing in the rain. This one girl, she gave us all this great recipe for broccoli slaw, and we were walking up this really hard hill...We were like, ‘Give us another ingredient...’ So now every time we hit a hill, we are like ‘broccoli slaw.’

As a motivational tool, Avon reminded walkers to remember why they were walking: You are making a powerful statement, raising money and awareness for all the people who have, have had, or will have breast cancer. As noted earlier, while some came to the Walk motivated by the cause, for many, breast cancer was peripheral. But participants told me that as they shared with other walkers, their understanding of “what they were doing,” and “why they were doing it” changed. Eileen trained with a large group and in doing so, she came to think of her participation not as her personal “sacrifice” for a cause, but as part of a group effort to reach a common destination:

Eileen: There is a lady that walks around Stone Mountain who will be at the 3Day Walk and she has one leg. She uses a prosthetic leg...and seeing that gave me even more incentive to keep going because she can do it with one leg and I am doing it on two. So I am thinking it is really making me a stronger person and making me realize the sacrifices in life that you have to do to achieve your common goal.
Eileen’s increased self-awareness was a feeling expressed by many study participants. They talked of becoming aware of breast cancer, its dimensions, and its effects, as they strode side-by-side with a survivor, with a survivor’s sister, mother, friend. Katie said she was raising money for “everybody” – the nameless, faceless people with breast cancer – until she started training with several survivors and heard their stories. Mary Katherine, too, talked of intensely emotional stories told by a training partner that changed her perspective on the disease and on those who struggled to survive:

Mary Katherine: To hear her stories about thinking that it was going to be her last Christmas...and giving ornaments and telling her husband...I don’t mind if you get married again, but...make sure that my daughters get these ornaments. I still have cold chills about that, when she told me that. She is a remarkable lady.

Linda said she became friends with the mother of a young woman with breast cancer, and during their training walks she listened to her new friend share her concerns, feelings, and frustrations as she watched her daughter battle the disease. The young woman died. Linda went to the funeral; she comforted her friend. Suddenly, for Linda, as for so many others, breast cancer was no longer statistics on a piece of paper, no longer the story of a stranger in a newsletter. It was real. It had a face. It was her friend. Linda had gone from considering the cause as an afterthought, to viewing her participation in the 3-Day as a personal statement about breast cancer. For her, the 3-Day now had a different meaning.

Linda: As I did my training...and started meeting people that were involved [in the Walk] and...women who had dealt with breast cancer and especially the family members and friend that were caretakers for these women...And I got to thinking, you know, if they can put out this much energy...ma ybe I can put out my energy through the fundraising process, through making a statement about breast cancer.
Training together, sharing their stories, creating rituals, moved walkers from their individual motivations to experiencing collective inspiration, but it was but one step in the process to becoming 3-Day walkers. As they continued preparing for the Walk through fundraising, the conflation of relationships became ever greater, and the walkers’ identities more focused.

Fundraising: Asking Donors to Share their Stories

Asking potential donors to share their stories is another very practical suggestion from Avon. *Give people a personal reason – remind them of the importance of the issue through their own experiences, urge them to make a personal connection, and they will give.* It is, in essence, issuing an invitation to join the 3-Day community, and in doing so, to participate in the fight against breast cancer. ‘Share your stories with me,” walkers said in their letters. ‘Let me walk for you, for someone you care about. Give me names to carry with me on the Walk. Let me represent your stories.”

This tactic of inviting contributors to share stories had powerful implications beyond the expediency of fundraising. First, donor stories were now added to and mixed with the folklore of the Walk. Walkers drew upon this folklore, weaving it into narratives to sustain the community. When Elizabeth’s training group started to complain, frustrated at all the time given up, and sometimes at the pain, she motivated them with stories that came from donors, friends, and family:

Elizabeth: I could only listen to them whine a little bit, and I would say, ‘This is why we are doing it: because we have a good friend who is 45 and is dying of breast cancer and we have to do this for her and for everybody else, and for you, and for our daughters’…
Susan wrote the names her donors sent her on a t-shirt. During the Walk, I saw people wearing t-shirts and buttons with names and pictures of people with breast cancer, stories made visible in material artifacts. Patients. Survivors. Memories. At the end of the first day, as I cheered walkers entering camp, I noticed a woman in a light pink t-shirt decorated with a message: “My reasons for walking.” Small, hand-written names filled the front and back.

The more stories walkers shared, the more people they perceived themselves to be walking for. They were training with survivors, getting names and hearing stories from their donors and their friends’ donors. Each story added another face to the disease. And with each new face, the walkers’ relationships to the cause seemed to strengthen.

Joyce: Since I have done this walk, I have come across people that are close to me who, either their mothers [or] friends are going through it now and it is hitting home. I am just hoping, and like I said praying, that we raise enough money to make a difference. So that next year if I decide to walk that hopefully I won’t have to know that somebody’s mother is taking chemo and that somebody else’s mother, who they opened up… and then closed her right back up because they couldn’t do anything.

Equally important, the accumulated stories raised awareness of the magnitude of the problem.

Franklin: It was just incredible the type of stories I got from people that gave me money because, I hadn’t known their mothers had breast cancer or died from breast cancer. And I did not really know it from knowing them, but they then donated and told me things like that.

Breast cancer touches a lot of people. Sure, 3-Day literature says that – with numbers:

“This year, approximately 182,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer” (Pallotta catalogue, 2001, p. 16). And, newsletters have stories about walker survivors. And, walkers expect some of the people they walk with will be survivors. But now walkers have a list, sometimes a very long list, of people they know,
or feel as though they know, who have experience with the disease, and they are walking for them.

Donors are active, though invisible, participants in the 3-Day. Walkers bring them into the community by sharing their stories, by carrying their names in the Walk, by sending them thank-you notes after the 3-Day, and finally, by walking for them.

**Fundraising: Making a Personal Statement**

Participants used a variety of fundraising methods – usually simple and understated – most suggested by Avon. While some used relatively impersonal methods – collecting money in a jar at a local store, making and selling pink ribbons at a local festival – personal letters, frequently following one of the form letters in the Avon binder, were the heart of most participants’ fundraising efforts and were the most successful.

Because of the amount of money each participant was required to raise, many, by necessity, had to move beyond their circle of friends, and family. For many walkers, this required thoughtful introspection; for the first time, they had to outwardly articulate what the breast cancer issue and the Walk meant to them. Susan remarked that, ‘it is important to have a cause and then be able to explain to people and express why you are doing it.’

Linda, too, spoke of being forced to reflect on her motivations:

Linda: The first year I relied on family and close friends. The first thing I did was look up my Christmas card list and sent letters to those people... then I did go to my boss, my co-workers... and I did approach one client. But those were a difficult group to approach because, again, I had to sit down, I had to really explain what I was doing and where I was coming from, whereas when you are going to close friends and family, often times, they’ll support you ‘just because’...

Linda’s comment foregrounds the complexity of the relationships among walkers, donors, the breast cancer cause, and the Walk. Do donors give money for the cause?
walker? Both? Or for some other reason altogether? The fact that walkers felt compelled to articulate a personal statement of why they were walking when asking people outside their friends and family to donate suggests that walkers think their friends and family are supporting their personal efforts to walk. The farther walkers reached beyond friends and family to others – co-workers, acquaintances, corporations and clients, and even strangers – the more emphasis they put on the cause, and their relationships to it. Walkers shared their own stories, giving potential donors the “opportunity” to support the cause; to make a statement without making the 3-Day commitment. “I’ll walk for you,” they said. Donors were perceived to support the cause through them.

Distinctions between the individual walker and the cause were camouflaged in situations where the walker was a survivor, or had had experience with breast cancer. “I had breast cancer.” “My mother had breast cancer.” Symbolically, these walkers were “the cause”:

Carrie: Fund raising was so easy because I had a lot of friends and family around the country who did not know I had breast cancer and I just had checks appearing in my mailbox on a daily basis, which just blew me away.

Patta: My letters were letters telling why I was walking. Everyone that knows me knows that my mom and my sister are survivors. And then this last year I did pictures [from the previous Walk] and I said, “If one picture is worth a 1000 words, I hope an assortment of pictures will be worth $2000 so that I can walk again this year.” And within two weeks time [I had the money].

Those with a story seemed to have little trouble raising money. For those who felt they did not have a personal story to tell, and needed to reach beyond family and friends, the task was much more difficult. For example, despite meeting survivors and making friends with other walkers and hearing their stories, Cheri, one of my participants, never
formed a connection to breast cancer, and was able to participate only because her training team supplemented her account. She attributed her problems with fundraising to being young (29), and having no story to tell. She said she ‘did not know anyone with breast cancer. It hadn’t hit my friends from college. People in their 20s are not getting breast cancer.’

Katie, on the other hand, who was 30, had similar fundraising difficulties, but said after the Walk that she had a new perspective on the disease and would use that knowledge to ‘back up’ her future fundraising efforts:

Katie: I am kind of quiet. I am not out there asking a stranger for a donation, it’s just not me. So I had to stick with my little friends and family and word of mouth and that was the hardest part for me. But I think it will be easier this year because I feel like I can back it up.

Walkers see themselves as both raising the money so they can walk, and raising the money to support breast cancer. Linda told me she had to stop thinking about donors as supporting her, because when they did not send her money, she took it personally. So she constructed a pitch offering potential donors ‘an opportunity for them to help me out but also to contribute...If [they] don’t choose to take the opportunity, it’s okay with me.” And Frankie, a breast cancer survivor, was ready to send checks back to her supporters if she was physically unable to participate; she could not disentangle the cause from her role in the Walk.

Why donors give money – to support the cause or to support the walker – may not matter. The funds do both – allowing the participant to experience the Walk, and sustaining the breast cancer cause. It also may not matter that walkers’ perceptions of their roles are conflated. At times they think of themselves as, literally, walkers, raising money to walk. At times they think of their participation as symbolic, physical action
through which they and others support breast cancer. These dual roles and motivations are naturally intertwined in the extreme nature of the event.

60 Miles of Meaning

Franklin: If you stop and think that somebody would actually pay – would have to collect a certain amount of money to do something like this. And it does hurt, you know, people do hurt their feet and get blisters and still want to go out and do it again...To see these women do 60 miles...it will blow your mind away.

Walkers trained and raised money, and with their commitment to meeting the demands of the Walk, they formed a rich folklore, shared values, created rituals. Now, time for the Walk, they are different from who they were when they first registered. They are a community, the “experienced rubric in and through which people read, think, feel, love, and plan” (Jensen and Pauly, 1997, p. 158), formed through an ongoing, dynamic process. The actual Walk, as I noted, seems to me a metaphor for that process, a tangible symbol of the individual commitments made at the outset, then transformed along the route of preparation, into collective action.

Day Zero: Sharing

It is Day Zero. Registration. Walkers and crew come and go all day at Lake Lanier, watching the safety video, attending crew meetings, getting tent assignments, turning in that last little bit of money to meet (or exceed) their goals. Avon asks walkers to have all pledges tent directly to the bank in Chicago, submitting only last-minute donations on Day Zero. Instead, many walkers asked donors to send the money to them, and then submitted all their checks at once. Participants offered pragmatic explanations for why they ignored protocol. They could send thank you notes immediately when
checks arrived. There was a long lag time between check submissions and account
updates; by collecting the checks themselves they could keep a tally without relying on
the 3-Day bookkeepers. So, on Day Zero, the line to the pledge tent was long, as walkers
added to their accounts. Some of them did not have enough. Some of them had more than
enough. And so they shared.

Kristi: We got there right at check-in and we saw people in line [who
needed] like $25 dollars, and I mean somebody might have that in their
pocket. I mean they were $200 short and couldn’t walk and they were
looking for that extra money. And if you had it, you could have handed
it to them.

Kristi and the other women in the focus group, all of whom were first-time walkers, had
already submitted the money they had raised before they went to registration. Carly said
next year she would collect checks herself, so she would be able to share her overages
with other walkers who had not raised enough. Franklin, who was walking for the second
year, had pledges sent to him and was able to give to several people who were short. It
gave him a “good feeling” to be able to help. He talked about the experience in his
journal:

Franklin: [W]hen I got in line [at registration] there were several people
who needed money. And so I went through a process of asking how much
they needed... And bottom line is, I was able to help out about four
different people with pledges and that was very rewarding for me ..they
were very, very grateful and thankful.

Sharing funds was common among teams and walkers who knew each other.

Cheri’s team helped her. Kristi and her walker friends helped each other. If one person
was short, another would make up the difference. Susan and her sister raised funds
together, and Elizabeth’s group pooled money to ensure everyone would be able to
participate. But on Day Zero, the sharing frequently was among strangers.
This deviation from the 3-Day organization’s guidelines is significant. It is better for the 3-Day if no one shares – more money per walker, especially if people ‘self-pledge,’ making up the shortage themselves.

But walkers want to help other walkers participate. I needed only a few moments in the pledge tent to note that for many, sharing funds is part of the culture of the 3-Day. Carly and Kristi, who now have seen ‘how it works” want to be able to share with others next time. For some, though, sharing funds is more problematic. Here, we return again to the complexity of the relationships between donor, cause, and walker. At the heart of the dilemma for these walkers is their perception of their role in a donor’s decision to contribute. For example, a woman who had walked in previous years said she felt hesitant to give others money that people had contributed to her, concerned that donors might not have liked the idea that their donations did not directly help her. So, she placed importance on how funds were credited. Nonetheless, the second year she walked, she too shared so a friend could participate. Similarly, it is unlikely that Frankie, who was prepared to return contributions if she was unable to walk, would have shared those contributions with others.

It is unclear exactly why walkers are so generous. Perhaps it is simply a matter of solidarity. Every walker knows how much training it took to prepare for the Walk. “If you weren’t as lucky in fundraising as I was, then I’ll help you.” And, in a sense, it seemed that no 3-Day walker was a stranger. Susan told me that she had a new appreciation for the effort that goes into participating in fundraising events, and in the future would be more generous in supporting others’ efforts:

Susan: [P]eople in the past have asked me to support causes they have been in – I will be much more giving in the future. I had a friend that ran
For others, too, perhaps sharing was an extension of the generosity others have shown. Elizabeth said that she had not realized ‘how much people care about causes. And you don’t realize that until you take on one. How generous people can be.’ Sharon also said she was ‘amazed’ by people’s charity:

Sharon: People’s willingness to give just never ceases to amaze me. They give and give and give to this cause. And being a survivor puts me that much closer to those people. They want to help me. They want to give more – time, money, whatever – towards it.

For her, sharing contributions at Day Zero was a reflection of her own experience.

Whatever the reason, walkers ‘just wanted to help’ others experience the Walk. It is THE event, the symbol of their commitment. The focus is no longer money. The contributions are in the bank. Once the Walk starts, it is a physical sacrifice, a bold statement, about breast cancer. To not walk would leave the walker experience incomplete, the identity unfulfilled.

Eileen: I think anybody that has an opportunity to witness this or play some part in this 3-Day Walk should do it because, like I say, it is a challenge, but it also lets you see what people are doing to make a difference in an individual’s life. Because it may not touch me, it may not touch you directly, but we don’t know if it may touch our mothers, our sisters, neighbors, friends.

That is also the message I heard from walkers who talked about the 2001 New York 3-Day. Originally scheduled for late September, it was postponed to October after September 11. Atlanta walkers understood and supported the postponement, but at the same time, empathized with people who had trained, and trained, and trained, and then might not have the opportunity to walk.
Adelaide: I feel sad [for the New York walkers]. Because I know how it feels. You have trained so hard and worked so hard for this and then to have it put off. That is how I would be here...it has to be hard and so my heart goes out to them.

“I want to walk...I have to walk”

For many walkers, it is crucial to walk every mile. As Franklin described, walkers “hurt their feet and get blisters and still want to go out and do it again.” They walk through the pain, pulled muscles, hurt knees, strains, etc. Despite assurances by the 3-Day organization that being “swept” (picked up along the route and driven to the campsite) is acceptable and even encouraged when a walker is having problems completing the miles, most participants I talked with trained vigorously to avoid the sweep vans. At the end of the day some walkers were in tears, but, they were determined to finish, to go on the next day. Each afternoon, I saw people literally limp to the check-in table. Eileen walked with a friend who pushed herself to finish:

Eileen’s journal, Day 3: We are only 1.6 miles away. Can’t wait to get there. I really want to get there because [my friend] is in so much pain, she keeps stopping at the medical so that they can tape up her knees and she keeps taking aspirin and extra strength Tylenol. So I can’t wait to get there, just so that she can sit down and put her feet up because she is in so much pain, but she is determined to make it.

At the end of the first day, I was walking through camp, helping people put up tents, and saw a woman leaning against a truck full of gear, tears streaming down her very red face. She looked like she might collapse at any moment. “Can I help?” I asked. But, she was incoherent. She calmed down a bit, and I finally understood that she felt nauseous, was exhausted, and was afraid to move. Frozen, she had been unable to locate her gear or her tent site. I offered to take her to the medical tent and she began crying again; she was afraid they would not let her walk the next day. I gave her Gatorade and
suggested she may ‘just need some rest ,’ but should seek medical attention. Another walker approached, trying to help. ‘I felt the same way about an hour ago ,’ she encouraged, ‘but after a visit to the medical tent and a nice hot shower I feel much better.’” Meanwhile, I flagged down a golf cart driven by a member of the medical crew, who stopped, comforted the woman, said she was probably dehydrated, and took her to the medical tent. The woman kept repeating, ‘I have to walk tomorrow. I want to walk. I have to walk. I have to walk.’”

I met another woman waiting in line at the medical tent at the end of the first day. She was seeking preventative medical attention to ‘hot spots,’ potential blisters, on her heels. Her tentmate told her, “You don’t have to walk all the miles tomorrow.” “I don’t want to leave you and the girls,” the woman replied. “I can do this.” The medical crew stayed busy, bandaging, cleaning, wrapping walkers’ wounds. I heard a nurse tell a woman, “You really shouldn’t walk on this, but I know you will, so just be careful, and take a sweep van tomorrow if you need to.”

Even participants who were physically unable to complete all 60 miles were determined to walk as many as possible. A doctor had warned Joyce that she ‘wasn’t in shape [to do the Walk].” Still, she set a goal:

Joyce: I just know that I am not physically fit to do the whole 20, but you never know, you could get in that group with all those people and just sort of..the time could fade away, depends on how many hills you have. So, I am saying I am going to do 10, but I don’t know.

In the end, she exceeded the miles she expected to walk. She wrote to her supporters:

Even though my doctor advised me against the Walk, I decided to participate at a 50% effort. Yes, I planned to walk 10 miles a day instead of 20. I figured I could do that much even if it hurt. I am proud to say that I walked 12-plus miles on Friday, 8-plus miles on Saturday, and 15 miles on Sunday...
That the walkers wanted to walk, indeed, perhaps *needed* to walk at all costs, was simply understood, but the underlying question is “why” did they feel this way?

Reasons for walkers’ passionate need to walk are multidimensional. Perhaps the sense of obligation to complete the Walk is a commitment to those who gave money. Joyce’s letter to her donor and Frankie’s desire to send checks back to her contributors if she did not walk seem to suggest this. Although donors do not pledge dollars-per-mile and money goes to the cause no matter how many miles the walkers complete, some walkers linked their performances to donors’ expectations. Second, walkers hear about what the Walk will be like from people who have experienced it and expect it to be “life changing” – an experience they just cannot miss:

Adria: I think something like this is going to be...life changing. I mean...I don’t see how it could not be. I don’t see how you could not be with 4,000 people, people who have fought for their life and survived; people who are still fighting and people like me who are just doing it for whatever the reason is; how you could walk 60 miles and sleep in a tent – how it could not change your perspective and change your life.

The route is where the folklore is shared, the rituals performed. It is not a matter of getting from point A to point B. It is path along which the community, the culture forms. To miss it, would be to miss being a part of that community. To miss the “butterfly guy,” the Harley riders, the dancing:

Adelaide: This one guy, butterfly guy was just crazy. He, this is his 22nd walk and he wears butterfly wings and rides along beside the bikers and he is just, he was so campy and bizarre and we had so much fun with him. Every stop we would look for Butterfly Guy and it just became a joke. Especially me, I would look for him, “Oh, there is Butterfly Guy”. And also the traffic guys, these Harley guys that were all along the way. We just loved those guys. Each of us kind of had our favorite one. There is

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16 The motorcycle crew were part of the traffic safety teams who traveled along the route ensuring walkers remained alert and monitoring the safety of the course. All 3-Day crew members also served as a cheering section, encouraging walkers and helping them when needed.
this one guy who made us jump up real high to give him high fives as we were going. Really the funniest one – he actually became somewhat of a celebrity – was this sort of burly Harley guy with a bandana and leather gloves and he would, every time he saw us coming, he would scream at the top of his lungs, he would say ‘Wassssssup.’ So that kind of became our thing and I would scream at him too…But stuff like that really kept us going. There was disco music along the way. At one point…one of the walkers in our group… I looked over and she was doing the electric slide. I became like the dancing queen. Every time we would stop and hear music, we would just dance. It just lightened us up as we went.

And finally, Avon knows walkers will feel pain, and provides a perspective in which the pain becomes significant to the experience. *The pain you feel is comparatively small as you walk to raise money for people who suffer much more through surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, treatment, for breast cancer.* ‘No whining.’ It was a 3-Day mantra. On the second day, when we awoke to rain, I listened as a group of walkers prepared themselves for the soggy morning ahead. At first they groaned about the conditions and potential blisters, but finally, one woman said, ‘Okay, whining over for today. If they can go through chemo, then we can do this.’ ‘That’s right,’ said another, ‘this is nothing compared to chemo.’ Immediately, the mood of the conversation changed, and the walkers departed, laughing at themselves in their rain ponchos, and checking their supplies of dry socks for later.

*‘The way you wish the world were every day’*: Shared values

Shared values are inherent in the process of creating a community. As such, walkers seem to have a very particular construction of behavior in the 3-Day community. Walkers are committed, they keep going, even through pain. They should be prepared. Walkers are kind. Walkers are grateful (for their health, each other, crew, family, community support). Many of these values start with Avon,
and grow into shared expectations. For example, Avon stressed courtesy and kindness in the safety video, newsletters, and emails:

Linda: Kindness is the watchword and the word that they always want us to keep in mind. Kindness to your tent-mate, kindness to other walkers, kindness to the people that we passed along the way.

Kindness was a lived experience during the Walk. Participants – walkers and crew – comforted each other in pain, both physical and emotional, giving encouragement at every possible juncture. Adelaide said she did not think her group would finish without the kind words of a crew member:

Adelaide: This one lady at this pit stop toward the end really inspired us… We were… at our lowest moment and she said that we would all be so proud of ourselves come Monday and that we would be unable to describe the accomplishment that we had made to anyone who asked us because it would just be so phenomenal… I don’t know how we would have ever made it without those words of encouragement.

Participants cheered each other, carried gear, and shared band-aids, dry socks, food, water, cell phones, and toothpaste. I gave my alarm clock to two women on a pit-stop team who were afraid they would not wake up in time to make their 4:00 a.m. crew call. Needs were met through the kindness of others. After rain Friday night soaked much of our gear, the Stage Crew worked together – some of us staying to fulfill our crew responsibilities, while others took the group’s wet sleeping bags and towels to the laundromat to dry. A woman in a tent near ours loaned another neighbor a spare tarp to place under her tent to keep the damp ground from seeping into her tent floor Saturday night. Crew and walkers helped each other set up tents, especially for walkers who came into camp late. Lauren was relieved when she finally made it to camp and found her campsite already prepared:
Lauren: The last night we spent up there, the tents had been rained on the night before. We got there after some of the other people did and they had put up our tent for us and wiped out all the water. And so we just put all our stuff in there and went right to sleep. It was wonderful to see our tent was ready because these people had supported us and been there for us. And that is the way we felt the whole time because there was so much support and encouragement from everybody.

I saw a crew member go through the food line time after time getting dinner for tired or hurting walkers. When I saw him come through the line after at least three trips, I said, ‘I hope you are going to get to eat some of that.’ ‘This one’s for me,’ he said. But, as I watched him walk toward a table, I saw him stop a woman limping toward the food tent and offer her his plate. He then went to the drink line, got a cup of tea and took it to her table. Then, back to the food line.

At camp and along the route, walkers and crew expressed a mutual appreciation for each other, and the role each was playing – making the Walk possible, more comfortable, walking for the cause. As I passed walkers in camp, they would smile at me and say, “Thanks, Crew.” To which I replied, “Thank you.” It was a 3-Day ritual that seemed to say, ‘We’re in this together;’ there’s no hierarchy here.

Kind gestures embodied the shared value of “human kindness” throughout the community. In a journal entry, Eileen said she was “amazed” at how people behaved in the 3-Day environment in comparison to other large-scale events:

Eileen: I am just so amazed at how nice all the people are. It is like I read somewhere in the Avon 3-Day brochure, it is the way you wish the world were every day. This lady had to go to the bathroom really bad and everybody let her in front of them in the port-a-potties. You know that if we were at a Hawks game or a Braves game, that would not have happened. It is just amazing how everybody gets along and everything it is like you wish every day could be like this.
“You wish every day could be like this,” she said, and yet, it is a grueling experience.

Eileen said in her journal that she was sore for several days after the 3-Day. It is unlikely she wishes for the 20-mile walk, but rather, for the courtesy and consideration she experienced.

People in the Atlanta community were also a source of kindness: girl scouts at the finish line making up cheers for walkers; boy scouts helping campers put up tents.

“Welcome 3-Day Walkers,” read signs in the neighborhoods through which they walked. Participants in one focus group described how the community support uplifted them, and opened their eyes to the ‘impact’ of their efforts:

Elizabeth: [Y]ou really realize…that what you are doing impacts and that other people really think a lot of it…They were out in their front yard with signs, pink ribbons on, and you realize that the fight against breast cancer is more than just us, it is families.

As Elizabeth said, during the Walk, participants got a firsthand glimpse at what their efforts meant to the larger community. They felt supported by the strangers who were willing to take the time to encourage them, cheering their progress.

Lauren: [T]here was this lady who was standing on the side, you know, in a parking lot as we were passing by and she had a megaphone and she was leading a cheer: ‘We are the walkers, the mighty, mighty walkers.’…And then she showed up again, like in another parking lot and that just gave us such a boost, you know just that kind of support from a complete stranger.

It is perhaps not surprising that even in a community so shored up by shared values there would be ‘deviants.” Linda said she had not been aware of people deviating from community norms the first year she walked, but noticed a difference in the last two Walks. She attributed the change to the number of people involved:

Linda: I found…an influx of people with different ideas about why we were there…[P]art of what the Avon 3-Day Walk and community is about
..has been lost, maybe in the sheer numbers of people that are involved these days.”

The most frequently mentioned violation was competitiveness. *The Walk is not a race.*

But a few participants did race, and this violated the “spirit of the 3-Day” for Linda. The spirit of kindness, of helping each other, of being united in purpose, not competing against one another:

Linda: [S]ome people took it upon themselves as being a competition. They wanted to be in the camp first and...they wanted to outdo the other...To me, that is not the spirit of what we were trying to do...

Dixie, who had run competitively, said she had to consciously make a distinction between the nature of the 3-Day and other events like marathons. She deliberately made an effort to conform to community standards, and was bemused by the people who seemed to be in a contest:

Dixie: I had to get used to the idea that it is not a race and it has been interesting for me to see that there are people who are a bit competitive about it...I did a training walk with a big group of people...And as you would expect, we did a fifteen mile walk, and within half a mile everybody was pretty spread out – which was good. But there were a couple who were just really, like obviously wanted to be first. And they had done the walk last year and apparently were one of the first ones in camp and they were very proud of that, you know. And although I respect that, in a way, I think it is not a great attitude to have for this.

Avon clearly states the Walk is not a race. This is, in part, a safety issue. Almost 3,000 people travel along narrow neighborhood roads and busy highways. The safety video – required viewing for all 3-Day participants, walkers and crew – emphasizes rules for safety: *No running, walkmans, or cell phones. Watch the road. Watch for each other. Be kind.* Avon stresses that every walker, from the first to the last, is cheered as s/he comes into camp; there is no reward for finishing early. As a matter of fact, walkers who came in early often went to work, putting up tents and helping their slower peers set up camp.
So, why do they compete? It is possible that the nature of the Walk draws people who are naturally competitive, or that the physical challenge may attract individuals who had trained competitively for other activities and found it difficult to abandon the competitive spirit. Perhaps these walkers had trained independently and had not developed the patterns of ritual and friendship and bonding. Or, perhaps it was, quite simply, their nature.

**Symbols upon Symbols – The Walk Comes to a Close**

Eileen: Closing ceremonies were awesome. We didn’t know what to expect…When we lined up and we walked down the park and then when we got to the opening and we heard the music and we were walking through…immediately when we walked through the little Avon 3-Day banner to join the line with people, I just started crying…It was really, really an emotional event, especially when the breast cancer survivors came through and we held up our shoe…and when they had the crew come in and everybody who assisted us came in and we started chanting thank you, thank you…

At the end of the Walk, the community came together in a symbolic ceremony. Walkers. Walker survivors. Crew. Distinguished by the colors of our shirts. Supporters surrounded this 3-Day community – now a part of it. Whatever motivations each person began with, whatever physical capabilities, we now stood together, experiencing ‘the meaning’ of the Walk, celebrating physical accomplishments and the millions of dollars raised in the name of breast cancer. What began months earlier as an individual decision was transformed into a community united for a cause. And in this closing ceremony, that became visible:

Patta: [S]urvivors coming down the center of that platform in their pink shirts …I just cry thinking about it. And the walkers holding…up one shoe…It is such a salute of love. And that is basically what the Avon 3-Day means to me. It is just telling people that we are going to beat cancer.
We were gathered around common values and a common cause experienced throughout the 3-Day Walk. At the end of the first day, as I cheered walkers entering camp, I noticed three women, each wearing a personalized shirt. In the center was a woman’s picture. “Walking for our sister,” the shirts said. A fourth woman walked with them. She, too had a personalized shirt: “Their sister,” it said, below a photo of the other three women. Another woman in a bright pink wig wore a large button with a picture on it. She said it was her friend who should be walking with her, but was in the hospital after a cancer recurrence. I saw a man wearing a t-shirt on the second day. On the front was a picture. On the back, “In Memory of Grace, 1960-2002.”

In the end, all these stories came together, a visual affirmation of the stories gathered one-by-one during the Walk and in the months before. Standing among these people, Mary Katherine felt a part of something important:

Mary Katherine: I think it was the first time in those three days that I actually realized how many people had come together to do the same thing. It was just kind of an overwhelming experience to know that that many peoples’ lives have been affected in some shape or form, and I was just one person helping to take on such a big cause.

As we drew together to celebrate, we felt connected to one another, seeing what we knew in our minds to be true – that this was a huge event, with thousands of people coming together to “make a difference” – and being “overwhelmed” by the extraordinary individual efforts that created the community. Each person came to the experience to fulfill a personal need. Together they worked to meet a societal need. Now, reaching their common destination, they were one voice, fighting for a cause. The ceremony ended. The colors blended, walkers, crew, survivors, spectators collectively embracing this shared moment.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Thus an active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a new conceptual system, that of the one striving to understand, establishes a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282)

This study is located on the cusp of change in public relations practice, research, and theory. Consumer-based cause-related corporate outreach efforts have become increasingly popular as corporations blend their philanthropic efforts with highly visible marketing campaigns (Salmon & Sun, 2002). Corporations now routinely go beyond their roles as producers and service providers to engage their publics as partners in dealing with social issues. While cultural scholars have criticized companies for creating an overly commercial society, the ever-louder corporate voice in social issues suggests a shift in its impact on our culture beyond the perpetuation of a capitalist economy. In addition, the emergence of extreme events like the Avon 3-Day and AIDS Rides that require a significant fundraising and physical commitment signals a considerable change in the way causes, corporations, and the public raise money to effect social change.

Participants, including the “regular people,” the cause and corporate sponsors, use the events to “make a statement” about the cause and show their commitment to it. This is a meaningful change in how our culture addresses social issues.

Literature on cause-related corporate outreach is cumbersome. A multitude of terms with inconsistent definitions create a conceptual confusion that is exacerbated by
the literature’s multi-disciplinary nature; studies derive from marketing, advertising, public relations, philanthropy, business, etc. (Adkins, 1999; Schreiber & Lenson, 1994). Much of the existing research is atheoretical, focusing primarily on case studies to arrive at guidelines for “successful” corporate outreach programs (Adkins, 1999; Pringle & Thompson, 1999; Sagawa & Segal, 2000), and survey-based consumer-effects research that does little to facilitate understanding of the complexities of corporate-audience relationships within a larger cultural context (Barone, Miyazaki & Taylor, 2000; Harvey, 2001, Webb & Mohr, 1999).

Current public relations theory is stymied by reliance upon a systems approach which has long dominated the discipline, but fails to adequately address issues related to public relations practice (Grunig, 2001). More recent applications of rhetorical theory offer a promising theoretical foundation from which to study corporate communication (L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Toth & Heath, 1992). However, the rhetorical paradigm is limited if scholars neglect the audience and focus only upon the speaker and the message. A more fruitful application of rhetorical theory embraces the Aristotelian view that the decisions and judgments made by the audience are central to rhetorical communication (Farrell, 1993; Toth, 1992): “For of the three elements in speechmaking – speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer that determines the speech’s end and object” (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991). Further, rhetorically informed public relations theory should welcome the contributions of cultural studies scholars who study communication within a larger social context, also privileging the audience as active in the communication process (Carey, 1975; Condit, 1989; Fiske, 1986; Newcomb, 1984; Radway, 1994).
I began this dissertation with the theoretical understanding that public relations is corporate rhetoric. That is, an organization’s communication is purposeful, intended to persuade, and the audience, or public, is active in the communication process. I brought with me to the study the epistemological and ontological assumptions of cultural studies: multiple realities are socially constructed, constantly changing (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), and exist within a complex social world (Carey, 1975; Geertz, 1973). In methodological terms, this necessitated that participants’ voices be privileged above my own (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kasper, 1994).

Thus, this study is an important step to understanding the cultural interactions and meaning-making experiences inherent in the communication process. It challenges dominant public relations research methodologies that tend to isolate elements of the social relationships existing between and among the company, cause, and participating publics. Instead, I used a complex qualitative methodological design to capture the 3-Day experience across time, and from different perspectives. Through interviews, I learned about participants’ motivations, preparations, and expectations prior to the Walk. Several participants kept personal accounts of their experiences in audio journals during and after the Walk. I added my constructions of the event based on participant observation. And, in focus groups after the 3-Day, walkers’ understandings of the Walk were “enriched with new elements” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282) through recollections and experiences shared. Each method privileged the participants as experts, as we collaborated to understand the meaning of the event (Kasper, 1994). This triangulated design helped me construct the experience from multiple perspectives, and increased the trustworthiness of the findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).
This final chapter addresses the research questions that were introduced in Chapter Three, and discusses the implications of these findings. I also consider the limitations of this study and avenues for future research.

**Avon, Ethos, Breast Cancer, and Identity**

Sharon: [People] don’t just say the 3-Day, they say, ‘Oh, you are doing the Avon 3-Day’… Everybody knows that it is associated with Avon.

Two research questions speak specifically to the audience-corporate-cause relationships: Do participants identify Avon as having “ethos” (credibility)? And, do participants identify with Avon and/or with breast cancer? Aristotle (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991) cautioned speakers that their credibility has a significant impact on how the audience perceives their messages. The audience considers not only what is being said, but the speaker’s integrity and eloquence, especially in epideictic rhetoric in which the audience role is to judge the speaker.

[A]dvocacy functions to attempt to create a ‘corporate ethos’ (or credibility) and a ‘specific reality’ for audience members to achieve ‘identification’ between the organization and the publics (Hoover, 1997, p. 4).

Burke (1950) argues that people construct identification by recognizing sameness or difference within each other, and it is through this identification that cooperation, or persuasion happens. Together, these concepts suggest that in order for a corporation to build relationships with its publics, it must be a credible speaker, and the public must be able to identify shared values.

Significantly, Avon did not arise naturally in my conversations with walkers. Although the company name and image are highly visible throughout the Walk experience, Avon is so integrally a part of the 3-Day Walk, it has become almost
invisible, much like Kleenex or Xerox, which have become synonymous with tissues and copiers respectively. As Sharon notes, everyone knows the event as the *Avon 3-Day*. When I asked participants what they thought of Avon as the sponsor, each made a connection between Avon and breast cancer, suggesting it was natural for a “women’s company” to support a “women’s issue.” The company, thus, has a strong “ethos” with the walkers, who acknowledged the company’s credibility.

Participants seemed to identify with the values inherent in the Avon 3-Day, constructing 3-Day walker identities consistent with commitment and kindness. However, Avon’s corporate identity seemed to be subsumed by the “Avon 3-Day” identity. Participants ceased to think about it as a corporation and started to see it solely in context of the event. As the focus group discussion indicated, participants might have thought about Avon’s corporate identity more consciously if Avon had been less successful in making a clear corporate connection to the breast cancer cause.

While Elizabeth’s comment, “Avon is a supporter of women, so to me that made it a little more meaningful,” may seem to contradict walkers’ lack of identification with Avon, it is noteworthy that she described her connection to the company in terms of her Avon Foundation grant, and use of Avon’s services for breast cancer patients. And, Sharon, a competitive golfer, had participated in other Avon events for women. Avon’s history as a “women’s company involved in women’s issues” resonated with her. Both Elizabeth and Sharon’s identifications with the company were inextricably linked to Avon’s “issue identity” rather than its identity as a cosmetic company. And, although Joyce had been an Avon representative years ago, it was almost as if I reminded her of that connection with my question.
In the corporate setting where profit guides companies’ perceptions of success, the inability to gauge the impact of Avon’s breast cancer initiatives on the ‘bottom line,’ can be problematic. In some sense, Avon does not appear to gain anything as a company. Is this cause-related corporate outreach worth the effort? Given the apparent lack of consumer identification found in this study, corporations should perhaps rethink their involvement in social issues, carefully evaluating their objectives for undertaking a cause-related effort, and their expectations for involvement. If they are expecting higher profitability, they may be disappointed. Yet, rhetorical communication has multiple purposes, and Avon’s epideictic involvement may have implications for future deliberative (policy) or forensic (defensive) messages (Perelman, 1979). Avon is possibly building goodwill that could help them in potential crises. Further, the company’s deliberative messages about breast cancer seem to be accepted by the Walk participants, who embrace the company’s ‘solutions’ to the disease. Corporations must evaluate what they want to say about the cause through their involvement.

Walkers clearly identified with the 3-Day Walk as an event, and the extreme physical and fundraising requirements of the 3-Day Walk would suggest that participants identify with the breast cancer cause. Certainly, that was true of many: survivors, activists, friends and family of people diagnosed with breast cancer. Sharon described herself as a breast cancer activist, as did Elizabeth, both of them survivors. Frankie and Adelaide said they probably would not have participated had they not been breast cancer survivors. They came to the Walk with an existing connection to breast cancer.

Couldry’s (2000) observation, however, reminds us that walkers enter the experience from many different points in their lives:
Each person carries with them an individual history of reflection which cannot be reduced to shared cultural patterns. Partly pure accident, and partly structured, this history is the trace of that person’s perceiving, absorbing, interacting, reflecting, retelling, reflecting again, and so on, a sequence endured by the person alone (Couldry, 2000, p.).

Some participants used the Walk to meet personal needs that had nothing to do with breast cancer. Linda used the Walk to build her self-confidence; Katie walked to feel better about herself after a divorce; and Dixie and Morgan both walked for the physical and fundraising challenge. But, despite each person’s ‘individual history,’ most, with the exception of Cheri, seemed to develop a connection, that is, to identify with breast cancer as they moved deeper into the 3-Day experience. The cause became the central characteristic of their walker identities as they articulated their involvement, interacted with survivors, and collected breast cancer stories from other walkers and their donors. The physical demands of the event came to symbolize their commitment to the cause. Indeed, their relationships within the context of the community became conflated as they constructed their walker identities in relation to the cause and the event.

**The Experience, Community and Values**

Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common…are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – likemindedness as sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. (Dewey, 1916, p. 5-6)

The remaining research questions ask about the participants’ lived experience of the Walk, how they express their sense of community, and what value links they develop with the company, cause, and each other. The story told in Chapter Six is, in essence, the story of the experience and the creation of a community and its values. Because these
concepts – lived experience, sense of community, and values – are so inextricably intertwined, they are discussed here together.

As Dewey (1916) observed, common understanding that enables us to live in a community “cannot be passed physically from one to another,” but is a product of social interaction. Condit (1985) argues that it takes both speaker and audience working together for community to emerge; the function of epideictic rhetoric is to build and maintain community. The role of the speaker is to define community by defining troubling issues, shaping values, and providing eloquent display. The audience role is understanding the issues, sharing the values, and judging the speaker’s eloquence.

Avon, in its speaker role, shaped the community framework through guidelines that defined the issue – breast cancer; shared values, like commitment and kindness – and did so by artfully crafting its communication to speak to participants. In its funding allocations, Avon defined ways in which to address a troubling issue. Funds raised went toward helping people who cannot afford health care receive diagnostic and treatment services. Funding also went toward research to help cure the disease. Avon then defined how people could take participatory action for the breast cancer cause by providing an outlet in the form of the Walk. Walkers chose to accept (or understand) these definitions and “solutions” for breast cancer, as signified by their participation.

In “reformulating the shared heritage” (Condit, 1985, p. 289) of breast cancer, Avon shaped a context through which participants, even those with little connection to the disease, came to identify with the cause, transforming personal motivations, when necessary, and as such, defining themselves within the 3-Day community. As noted, Avon painstakingly orchestrated the Walk from beginning to end. For example, Avon
suggested that the way for walkers to physically prepare themselves, was to train with other walkers. The outcome of this suggestion went well beyond the expediency of helping walkers become physically fit. It created an environment in which walkers talked, shared stories and rituals, created friendships, bonded. “We have so much fun on those [training] walks. We talk about everything under the sun,” said Adelaide. “There is a lady that walks around Stone Mountain who will be at the 3-Day Walk and she has one leg” (Eileen). “To hear her stories about thinking that it was going to be her last Christmas…” (Mary Katherine).

Avon also advised walkers that the way to reach potential contributors was through making connections to breast cancer – sharing their personal breast cancer stories, and inviting donors to tell their own. In this process, walkers had to carefully reflect on why they were walking. This introspection frequently strengthened their commitment to the issue. Linda noted, ‘I had to really explain what I was doing and where I was coming from.” Then, participants listened to stories from their donors. In following these pragmatic guidelines for training and fundraising, walkers shared folklore, values, beliefs. Now, breast cancer statistics were people. Aunt Susan. Tommy’s teacher. My boss’ granddaughter. It is at this point walkers began to truly share the community.

Again, because walkers acknowledged that they used Avon’s guidelines, it would be tempting to view those guidelines simply as tools for transmitting information (Carey, 1975). But, as this study has repeatedly shown, to do so would miss the complexity of ‘what’s really going on’ – people creating a symbolic world defined by and defining them.
In its speaker role, the Avon 3-Day also provided vivid display – from the powerful prose of newletters and brochures, to the antics of the butterfly man and the Harley guys, to the pageantry of the closing ceremony – by which participants were entertained, and judged Avon on its performance (Condit, 1985). For example, in a focus group discussion, participants said that while it did not matter to them that Avon was the sponsor, it would have mattered, in a negative sense, had they not “done it well,” which I interpreted to be a judgment on Avon’s display – how well it went about producing the Walk and how well the Walk was organized.

Beyond the obvious shared value of the commitment to breast cancer, the most explicit values linking participants in and to their community were kindness and humankind. The 3-Day was a world in which people perform random acts of kindness for others. Linda and Eileen spoke about kindness at length in their journals, and others mentioned it as one of the highlights of their experiences during the actual walk. “Kindness is the watchword” (Linda). “It is the way you wish the world were every day” (Eileen). Participants’ discussion of “humankind” came directly from Avon 3-Day communication.

Other strong values emerged as participants talked about their experiences. They talked about commitment, and proved their commitment by giving their time and energy to train and raise money, and finally, to walk, even through pain. Walkers talked about the generosity, support, and the compassion of friends, family, and donors, and showed their own generosity by sharing donations with people who wanted to walk, but had been unable to raise sufficient funds. These values all were integral to the formation of the 3-Day community.
And of course, walkers talked about activism, the importance of having a cause, the power of the individual to make a difference – for breast cancer, another cause, or the community in general. Walkers shared Pallotta’s “I’mpossible Dream” of taking social action:

It is my dream… within my lifetime… to have significantly impacted the way that Americans spend their discretionary time so that the pursuit of positive social change, through brave individual action based in kindness and compassion, becomes a natural part of every American’s life. (Dan Pallotta, 2001, p. xv)

Implications

This dissertation has implications for the study of relationships between corporations and active publics, particularly as they relate to corporate involvement in social issues. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the increasing presence of the corporate voice in social issues places those companies engaging in cause-related corporate outreach outside their traditional domain, and into the ‘business’ of shaping socially constructed values. These findings suggest that within the context of their relationships with a cause-related corporate outreach effort, audience members construct their realities, define their identities, and shape a community based on the corporation’s communication. The audience interprets meaning, but those interpretations are restricted by frames of reference (Acosta-Alzuru, 1999; Condit, 1989; Fiske, 1986). In the Walk experience, the folklore and rituals walkers create outside of Avon, provide another powerful frame of reference – shared realities – which they use to build their relationships within the 3-Day community. This implies the company’s messages about breast cancer resonate within a larger social context.
Striving to be good corporate citizens, and working to ‘better’ society, corporate involvement in causes raises both practical and ethical issues. Companies thinking about creating a corporate outreach program should seek to understand the role they play in constructing community values about the issues they choose to address. First, as suggested by these findings and earlier case studies (Adkins, 1999; Sagawa & Segal, 2000), successful campaigns depend upon how well company values match the values of both the cause and society. The Avon 3-Day Walk flourishes in part, because the company ensures its key messages are reinforced by walkers’ interactions within a larger cultural frame. Although Avon’s corporate identity became hidden behind its social identity, this only served to heighten its credibility. But, if Avon is involved in the Walk to improve its place in the market, this study suggests such strategy is failing – at least among the study participants. Again, as suggested earlier, companies should reflect on the reasons for their participation, understanding why they chose to become involved, and what outcomes they expect.

Second, companies that engage the public in their cause-related corporate outreach efforts have a weighty responsibility when they choose an issue. They have to recognize that they can play a role in defining social values. Certainly, they must choose a cause that matches their corporate ethos. But they must also examine the societal implications of their prescribed ‘solutions’ to an issue. That is, companies prescribe how society should address an issue when they designate how funds are used. What cause a company chooses to take on and the corresponding solution may appear to be pragmatic decisions, but can have significant social importance. These epideictic events embody Condit’s ‘communal definition,’ reaching thousands of people who not only participate,
but give. Companies have the potential to powerfully shape the public agenda; that potential is at the root of much social criticism. If events like these are only for “safe” issues, other important causes are neglected (Lieberman, 2001). Companies need to be ready for and responsive to criticism that might arise, having a clear understanding of their intentions and their contributions to the social dialog surrounding the cause.

Adoption of rhetorical theory and cultural studies approaches to study public relations have important implications for public relations theory and research methodology. Grunig (2001) calls for scholars to offer alternative theories rather than simply criticize existing ones. This study offers a cultural-rhetorical paradigmatic frame from which scholars can address the corporate speaker and the audience as an active participant in the communication process. The following section on future research will begin to suggest ways in which further use of the cultural-rhetorical paradigm can add to the body of knowledge in public relations research.

Methodologically, a cultural-rhetorical approach suggests researchers must use interpretive techniques to uncover webs of meaning found in human social interaction (Geertz, 1973). While these paradigms do not preclude understanding communication as information transmission (Carey, 1975), they emphasize the complexities of communication within a cultural framework, and thus, necessitate the use of naturalistic qualitative methods to better understand the complexities of the relationships built and maintained by the use of public relations. To study these relationships as they function in society enables us to see the intricacies that might be lost if those relationships are parsed out and isolated from their context.
Limitations and Future Research

The most obvious limitations of this study are that it is a case study limited to a single event – the Atlanta 2001 Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day – and emphasizes a single public, the walkers. Although I recruited participants who were diverse in age and race, the nature of the Walk limited the number of men in the study (only 3% of walkers in the Atlanta 3-Day were men).

This study marks an important transition in public relations research, using rhetoric-based public relations theory, and studying the public as an active, integral part of the communication process. It suggests the value of continued research on the social phenomenon of cause-related events, and on cultural investigation into the relationships between corporations and their publics.

The insertion of cause-related events into our culture merits investigation into the cultural values that make extreme events marketable. The study of other extreme events, including 3-Days in other cities and other cause-related events like AIDS Rides is an obvious extension of this work. Two issues are immediately apparent: how do cause-related events work, and what are the ethical implications for the causes? Such studies can provide additional understanding of the communities that form around these activities. Of particular interest might be events for less-visible causes, such as adoption and suicide prevention, or the most extreme of extreme events. Critics say companies choose “safe” issues; how do participants choose which issues to support? Is it the issue or is it the adventure or challenge of the event that draws participation?

The intention of this study was to focus upon the audience, which is seldom explored in traditional public relations research. But, the value that can be derived from
studying corporate communication from a rhetorical perspective should not be overlooked. Avon undertakes an extensive recruitment campaign, communicates continuously with participants, and addresses the public through press releases and other publicity tactics. Rhetorical analysis of this corporate discourse is a direction for future study on a number of dimensions. How does Avon construct a 3-Day participant in its discourse? What audience subjectivities does Avon speak to in its communication with participants (e.g., recruitment materials speak to “regular people” who want to do something for society)? Such textual analysis could answer questions regarding the tensions between the individual goals of participants and the social goals of the event, lending insight into some participants’ “subversive” behavior (e.g. giving money away at registration), and mixed motives for participation. Additionally, textual analysis may also show how Avon constructs the 3-Day community. A careful analysis of the language it uses to communicate with participants, and the participants’ language in describing their experiences may allow us to observe links in the rhetorical process. Also, while messages from Avon and Pallotta Teamworks are essentially the same, they are also unique in that Pallotta incorporates similar language in all its events – through its catalog of causes and events, the safety video, and Dan Pallotta’s (2001) book, *When Your Moment Comes*. Further research projects should examine Pallotta’s messages of empowerment to better understand the company’s place within the context of social issues, epideictic events, and the participating publics.

The complex web of relationships identified here suggests numerous opportunities for future research. For example, donors are active participants in the community-building process, and the meaning they give their involvement is a dimension
that promises to clarify relationships between walkers, donors, and the cause. Do donors give to the walker? To the cause? Do they think about the event sponsors?

What is the impact of Avon’s discourse on the multi-layered publics, from participants, to donors, neighbors and townsfolk who see participants training, the larger community through which the walkers trek, and the people who read, watch, and listen to media coverage of the event? Research addressing these multiple publics may also add depth to understanding the dynamic between a company’s corporate identity and its philanthropic identity created through cause-related events. Such study may help us better understand whether corporate involvement in social issues is of value to the company. This is especially important for the Avon 3-Day. As I was completing this study, Avon announced it would no longer sponsor the 3-Day Walks (Avon website, online at www.avon.com). After four years, the company decided to withdraw from its partnership with Pallotta because of shareholder concern about the costs of the Walk (Crary, 2002). Avon continues its support of the 2002 3-Days, but is noticeably absent from the website for 2003 events (online at www.breastcancer3day.org/events_2003.htm). Pallotta Teamworks plans to continue the 3-Day Walks with a yet-to-be named sponsor and beneficiary.

Avon’s decision to withdraw its name is significant at this time of heightened public scrutiny of cause-related corporate outreach efforts. Although thousands of people have participated, and continue to participate in the 3-Days, and millions of dollars have been raised for the Avon Foundation, Avon was criticized from within and chose to listen to their shareholders and discontinue this fundraising opportunity. Also, the findings of this study indicate Avon was not getting much value from its participation, at least from
the walkers’ perspective. Walkers talked about the company only when prompted, and
rarely discussed Avon products. Did Avon know this, and did it impact their decision?
Again, what was Avon’s expectations when it became involved in the Walk and with
breast cancer, and how did those expectations affect its decision to shift fundraising
strategies? Is the company evaluating its other efforts to raise money for breast cancer?
To study this change in Avon’s fundraising direction would require access to the
company’s decision-making process through interviews and internal communication that
dокументs those decisions.

Another area ripe for investigation is for-profit charity organizations like Pallotta
Teamworks, which produces the Avon 3-Day and other events that require similar
commitments. Avon’s withdrawal from the 3-Days and Tanqueray’s retreat from the
AIDS Rides leaves Pallotta without any major corporate sponsors for its events. If
corporations decide their involvement in social issues does not provide a good return on
investment, are companies like Pallotta the future for raising large sums of money for
social causes? The proprietary nature of the data needed to complete a study of Pallotta
may make this strand of research more difficult.

Finally, research should also take a look at the influence cause-related corporate
outreach events have on the social issues they address. What benefits do cause-related
organizations derive from corporate sponsorship? What does corporate involvement
mean to those social issues and the beneficiary organizations? What happens when a
company decides to pull away from the social issue or change direction? And, how does
corporate involvement impact individual involvement in social issues?
Extending this study to areas described above will contribute to our understanding of corporation-public relationships within the context of our complex cultural world, the meaning publics give to their relationships with corporations, and the social impact of corporate involvement in social issues.
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APPENDIX A

PROFILES OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

ADELAIDE

Adelaide (42) is a breast cancer survivor. She is married with two school-age children, and works as a freelance writer. This was her first 3-Day. She did not know anyone who was participating, but after registering she met people in her area who were also walking and began to train with a group. Adelaide kept a journal during the Walk. She expressed interest in continuing to raise money for breast cancer and other causes, but was reluctant to say she would walk in another 3-Day, and seemed more inclined to be part of the crew or team of volunteers, or participate in another fundraiser.

ADRIA

Adria (40) is a close friend of Sharon, and became involved in the Walk because of their friendship. The two are training partners and live in the same neighborhood. Adria is married with two children, a teenager and an elementary-school-aged daughter. Her husband travels a lot, which made finding time to be away from family to train for long distances somewhat difficult. Adria describes herself as undisciplined in regard to exercise, and does not anticipate continuing as rigorous a training routine as has been necessary to prepare beyond the 3-Day weekend. In addition to raising money for breast cancer, Adria is also involved in raising money for diabetes research because her mother had the disease.
DIXIE

Dixie is 45 years old, a musician and a university professor. She travels often with her work. Dixie is a fitness enthusiast and became involved with the Walk because of the physical challenge. She trained alone most of the time, but would join groups occasionally to do long walks. She considered doing the New York 3-Day, but chose the Atlanta Walk because it fit with her schedule. A friend from out of state joined her in the Atlanta 3-Day. Dixie kept a journal during the Walk.

EILEEN

Eileen (39) is African-American, single, and engaged to be married. She was planning to move to Louisiana in 2002. She became involved in the Walk as a tribute to a friend with breast cancer. Like Joyce, she was active in fundraising at work and in the community, participating in the March of Dimes and other charitable activities. As a young woman she served in the Army, but was hesitant about the thought of camping and using portable toilets. She was committed to a demanding exercise regimen, determined to finish all the miles. Her family in Michigan helped her raise the required contribution through a fundraising dinner. Eileen’s journal was full of witty observations.

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth is 50 years old and is a breast cancer survivor. She is married and has a teenaged son. Elizabeth is a nurse and works for a breast cancer unit in a hospital. She was recently awarded an Avon grant to implement a program for breast cancer patients.
She is an advocate for breast cancer-related causes. The 2001 Walk was Elizabeth’s second 3-Day. She recruited several fellow breast cancer survivors to participate with her.

FRANKIE

Frankie is 31 years old and is a computer specialist for a bank. She is a four-year breast cancer survivor (diagnosed at age 26). She is married with an eight-year-old son. Frankie is an advocate for breast cancer, serves on the board for the local chapter of the American Cancer Society and works on other fundraisers to raise money for cancer-related charities. She is a self-described “lazy person” and said training for the 3-Day is the most intense, disciplined exercise she has done. She trained with her pastor’s wife, also a young breast cancer survivor participating in the Walk. The 2001 Walk was her first 3-Day.

FRANKLIN

Franklin is 51 years old and participated in the Atlanta 3-Day for the second time. His wife participated as a crew member. He has a teenaged son and college-aged daughter. He works for a local hospital, but also has several side enterprises. Franklin was very outgoing and friendly. He was very active in the community. Although he had no personal experience with breast cancer, he had several friends and co-workers who were survivors. In addition to work with the 3-Day, Franklin was also involved in a charity for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) because he had a child die of SIDS in the 1980s. Franklin kept a journal during the 3-Day.
JOYCE

Joyce is 37 years old and a first time 3-Day participant. She is an African-American and worked for a state agency. The agency was closing at the end of the year and she was looking for a new job. Joyce is a single mother and said being the only caregiver made it difficult to find time to train. Her training regime seemed somewhat inconsistent because of the turmoil in her job and home life. Her doctor also advised her to cut down on her walking because of a problem with varicose veins. Joyce has been active in raising money for various charity groups through work and the community. She committed to the 3-Day because of a strong family history of cancer, including breast cancer. She also knew friends and co-workers with breast cancer. Joyce was also an Avon representative when she was younger. Joyce knew she would probably not finish the miles each day, but was committed to participating. She was a journal-keeper during the Walk. One of her co-workers, Eileen was also walking in the 3-Day.

LINDA

Linda (48) is an accountant specializing in tax work. She is married and has two grown sons. The 2001 Atlanta 3-Day marked Linda’s third time as a walker. She decided to do the first 3-Day as a personal challenge, and continued to participate. She has no personal experience with breast cancer. She maintains a rigorous training routine, walking alone during the week and with a training partner or larger group on the weekends. Her responses were very descriptive and introspective. Linda kept a journal during the Walk.
MORGAN

Morgan (40) is an insurance agent. She is a fitness enthusiast who had no prior experience with breast cancer or extreme events like the 3-Day. She is single and has three brothers, all of whom were planning to attend the closing ceremony with her parents. She and a friend registered for the event together and trained together. This was her first experience with the 3-Day.

SHARON

Sharon is a breast cancer survivor. She is married with two school-age children. She said she has always been a breast cancer advocate, and began getting mammograms at age 34. This is her first Avon 3-Day. She is 46 now and was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. She credits early detection for her survival. Sharon is very vocal about her experience, and talked freely about her involvement in the Walk and her personal story as a survivor. Prior to her breast cancer diagnosis, Sharon owned part of a construction company. She recently sold her partnership and now teaches building construction at a local university.

SUSAN

Susan is 32 years old, is married and has two small children. She works part-time in a family business. Susan’s mother-in-law participated in the Walk two years ago, and Susan attended the closing ceremony. After seeing the finale she decided to participate,
but became pregnant and had to wait a year. This was her first 3-Day. Her sister also walked and was her training partner.

**SYLVIA**

*Sylvia* is 50 years old and registered for the Walk after hearing about it from a friend on her 50th birthday. She has no personal experience with breast cancer. She took on the Walk as a personal challenge. She described herself as physically active, but had not been in a disciplined exercise program before training for the Walk. She lost ten pounds during training. *Sylvia* is married with two grown children. She works for a large corporation that encourages employees to volunteer and be involved in the community.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

AVON 3-DAY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Thank you for participating in this study: "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event" conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. This study is to gain a better understanding of one of Avon’s outreach programs, the Avon Breast Cancer Three-Day Walk. You will be asked questions about your experiences in the Avon event.

The interview will be approximately one to two hours and will be audio taped and transcribed. The interview may cover emotional and personal topics about your experiences as they relate to the three-day walk and to breast cancer. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time without giving any reason. The interview will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. For purposes of confidentiality, the tapes and transcripts will be labeled with pseudonyms. If quotes are used from the transcripts your name will not be used to identify you. Tapes will be kept in the researcher’s archives to ensure adequate analysis and publication of results.

If you have any questions after the interview, please contact the chief investigator, Heidi Edwards, 157 Crossbow Circle, Winterville, GA 30683; phone: 706-316-3652; email: heidihat@arches.uga.edu. You may also contact Ms. Edwards’ research advisor, Dr. Peggy J. Kreshel, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602; phone: 706-542-5045.

I, _________________________________ agree to participate in the research titled "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event " conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. I have read the information above, and understand that I do not have to take part in the study and I can stop the interview without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.
<table>
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For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu).
AVON 3-DAY PARTICIPANT JOURNAL CONSENT FORM

Thank you for participating in this study: "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event" conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. This study is to gain a better understanding of one of Avon’s outreach programs, the Avon Breast Cancer Three-Day Walk.

You will keep an audio-taped journal of your feelings and experiences during the 3Day. When and where you make audio entries into the tape-recorder provided, and what you say is at your discretion. You may say as much or as little as you choose. After the event, your audio-taped journal will be collected and transcribed. Your participation is voluntary and you may ask that certain portions of the tapes be withheld from the transcripts. The journals will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. For purposes of confidentiality, the tapes and transcripts will be labeled with pseudonyms. If quotes are used from the transcripts your name will not be used to identify you. Tapes will be in the researcher’s archives to ensure adequate analysis and publication of results.

If you have any questions after you turn in your tapes, please contact the chief investigator, Heidi Edwards, 157 Crossbow Circle, Winterville, GA 30683; phone: 706-316-3652; email: heidihat@arches.uga.edu. You may also contact Ms. Edwards’ research advisor, Dr. Peggy J. Kreshel, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602; phone: 706-542-5045.

I, ________________________ agree to participate in the research titled "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event " conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. I have read the information above, and understand that I do not have to take part in the study and I can stop participating without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

_____________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Investigator Date                                Signature of Participant Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.
AVON 3-DAY PARTICIPANT FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Thank you for participating in this study: "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event" conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. This study is to gain a better understanding of one of Avon’s outreach programs, the Avon Breast Cancer Three-Day Walk.

The focus group will last approximately two hours and will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be asked questions about your experience during the 3Day walk. The discussion may cover emotional and personal topics about your experiences as they relate to walk and to breast cancer. Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the discussion at any time without giving any reason. Your participation is confidential, and what you say will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. For purposes of confidentiality, the tapes and transcripts will be labeled with pseudonyms. If quotes are used from the transcripts your name will not be used to identify you. Tapes will be in the researcher’s archives to ensure adequate analysis and publication of results.

If you have any questions after the focus group, please contact the chief investigator, Heidi Edwards, 157 Crossbow Circle, Winterville, GA 30683; phone: 706-316-3652; email: heidiha@arches.uga.edu. You may also contact Ms. Edwards’ research advisor, Dr. Peggy J. Kreshel, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602; phone: 706-542-5045.

I, _______________________________, agree to participate in the research titled "The Avon 3Day Breast Cancer Walk and Rhetorical Public Relations: Experiential Outcomes of a Cause-Related Corporate Outreach Event" conducted by Heidi Edwards, a Ph.D. candidate from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. I have read the information above, and understand that I do not have to take part in the study and I can leave the focus group without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Investigator          Date              Signature of Participant          Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Grand Tour Question:
- Tell me about your experience in deciding to participate and prepare for the Avon 3-Day Walk.

Interview Guide:
- How and why did you decide to become involved with the Walk?
- What kinds of personal experiences have you had with breast cancer?
- Have you participated in other breast cancer “events” (e.g. other walks or activities to raise money for breast cancer, donations, etc.)? How about other fundraising events?
- What do you think about events like these? (How do you see this event within the context of other fundraising events?)
- What kind of support have you received from family and friends? What about from Avon?
- How has fundraising been going? How are you raising funds?
- Tell me about the messages you have been receiving from Avon.
- What support materials (from the organization) have been most useful to you? Why?
- Have the motivational messages from Avon/Pallotta helped you prepare for the walk?
- Tell me about [one of] your training walks. What about your training regimen?
- How are you feeling about the walk right now?
- What are your expectations for the walk? [What is your image of the event?] Why do you think Avon got involved in this?
- Tell me what you are thinking about Avon. As a company. As a sponsor of the event.
- What are you learning through your experience?
- What is this doing for you as a person? What are you getting out of it?
APPENDIX D

Avon 3Day Journals

Thank you for agreeing to keep an audio journal during the Avon 3Day! Enclosed in this packet are the tools for your journal:

- Microcassette recorder w/ batteries
- 3 Tapes (1 tape in recorder)
- 2 Extra batteries
- Return address label
- Return postage
- Consent form (2)
- Disposable camera (bonus as a thank you for doing this 😊)

As I mentioned when we first talked, the journal is for you to record your thoughts and feelings about your experience during the Avon 3Day. Feel free to say anything you want, including talking about people you’ve met, things you’ve seen, or any other happenings or emotions that illustrate your experience.

Here are a few general requests regarding format and instructions for returning the journal to me:

1. Each time you make an entry, please start with the day, time and your location.
2. On Day Zero, please make an entry about how you are feeling about the walk before it begins.
3. One or two days after the walk, please record or write a journal entry about how you feel now that the journey is complete, and the meaning the walk had for you.
4. Please mail the recorder, tapes and one signed consent form back to me by October 15, using the same envelope and the return address and postage. (The other consent form is for you to keep.)
5. Enjoy the disposable camera. It is yours for the event as a thank you from me. If you would like to share a photo that is particularly
meaningful to you, please include it in the return package, but please feel no obligation to do so.

Again, thank you for your help in my research. I will be contacting you to make sure you received the package, but if you have questions or comments, please email me at heidihat@arches.uga.edu or call (706)316-3652. I'll be on stage crew and hope to see you in camp.

Good luck and happy walking!!!
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE

1. Consent form & questionnaire
   a. Explain study, consent form
   b. Fill out & return both forms – keep second copy of consent form

2. Set up name tents

3. Rules
   a. Tape recorded – please talk one at a time
   b. I may say your name frequently so as to more easily identify changes in speakers

4. Introductions
   a. Name
   b. Why did you get involved in the Avon walk?
   c. What is your most memorable image? (from questionnaire)

5. Brainstorm descriptors of walk experience

   Things to cover:
   - Community
   - Training
   - Fundraising
   - Avon
AVON 3-DAY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE
(Please do not put your name on this sheet.)

1. Was the Atlanta 2001 Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day your first 3-Day event?
   YES  NO

   If not, when/where/how did you participate before? (For example: Atlanta, 2000, walker)

2. Age: _______

3. Please check highest level of education you have earned:
   a. High school diploma ______
   b. Some college ______
   c. 2-year degree or certificate ______
   d. 4-year college degree ______
   e. Graduate degree ______
   f. Other ______


5. If not, do you plan to participate? YES  NO

6. If you are registered or plan to register, will you walk or crew? _________________

7. What is the most memorable image you hold of your entire 3-Day Walk experience?