

# Community Relations and OPR: In Search for a New Approach to Local Corporate Community Initiatives

Jennie Peña Escobar  
Universidad del Norte, Colombia

## Abstract

The rising importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in Colombia, following a well-established global trend of businesses committing to social, economic and environmental sustainability, has contributed significantly to pressure private local businesses to take on a greater role as corporate citizens and assume a more proactive approach within the communities in which they are operate.

In seeking to respond to this demand, every day the number of medium and large businesses carrying out community initiatives increases in the city of Barranquilla. However, while a considerable number of these companies declare to have adopted CSR policies, important deficiencies in the way they relate to their stakeholders can be detected, and there is little analysis by which to assess how the engagement process is perceived by the publics the companies seek to reach out to.

The study will analyze the organization–public relationship (OPR) among three companies and the local community of Barranquilla, Colombia. The interest is to explore the organizations' attitudes towards community involvement, the practices of these corporations for building relationships with the community, and how these relationships are perceived by the community. In-depth interviews and focus groups will be conducted with both companies and community members. Hon and J. Grunig's relational elements such as trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction will be examined as they relate to relationship building and maintenance.

## Introduction

The current working scenario where corporations find themselves today, is no longer a world where purchasing decision are made solely based on criteria such as affordability and convenience for consumers. Today, more than ever, corporations are faced with the reality that their decisions and actions are being closely monitor by more educated consumers, who not only expect, but more often are starting to demand, socially responsible behavior from the corporations they chose to relate, and give their business to. Interests in the role of businesses in society have been promoted by increased sensitivity to, and awareness of, environmental and ethical issues such as improper treatment of workers, child labor, environmental problems and consumer welfare.

Because the idea that businesses are obliged to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions, as well as to make contributions to the societies of which they are a part, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has increasingly moved up in the organizations' strategic agenda, from an assistentialist approach to business to a prime management value. The changing expectations of companies to become good corporate citizens have allowed the integration of CSR into the core culture of major corporations over the past few years.

The KPMG International survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2008 states that three-quarters of the top 250 companies listed in Fortune Global 500 (G250) for the year 2007 have a corporate responsibility strategy that includes defined objectives, and that 63 percent of them use a structured approach to stakeholder dialogue, up from 33 percent in 2005. In the midst of this global transformation, corporations worldwide are engaging in some form of corporate citizenship actions, for a variety of reason ranging from ethical to reputational, political as well as philosophical (Young & Burlingame, 1996).

Following in the steps of corporations in economically developed countries, current trends in Latin America include the deepening of CSR models, the extension of CSR practices to small and medium-size enterprises, an increase in cross-sector alliances, and the building of relational capital through the development of grassroots organizations (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004)

In Barranquilla, Colombia - the case has been no different. The rising importance of Corporate Social Responsibility, has contributed significantly to pressure private local businesses to take on new roles as corporate citizens and assume a more proactive approach within the communities in which they operate. Due to the deep implications of being socially responsible, every day the number of medium and large businesses carrying out corporate community initiatives increases.

However, as in the rest of Latin America, where distance and distrust make it difficult for businesses to assess community needs develop plans to address these needs, and learn from the processes (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004), while a considerable number of companies in Barranquilla, Colombia declare to have adopted a policy of CSR, important deficiencies in the way they relate to their stakeholders can be detected. Specifically, they have difficulty identifying to whom their CS programs should be directed to, and many do not understand clearly the needs and demands of their stakeholders. (Mejia, 2008)

Drawing upon the concepts of OPR and Stakeholder Engagement, this research explores how local private companies create, maintain and enhance relationships with their communities, based on their Corporate Community Involvement practices. The premise of this research is that effective community relations should meet the needs of both the organization and its key community constituencies (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001).

A case study methodology will examine examples of three firms in Barranquilla, Colombia, that have demonstrated a clear desire to become socially responsible. By closely examining a relatively small number of cases, and comparing and contrasting them, the researcher learns about significant features of the phenomenon and how it varies under different circumstances (Yin, 1994).

The significance of this study lies in investigating the stakeholder process, as it is being practiced in Barranquilla's private sector, in order to develop a framework that will allow local companies to reinforce their community relations efforts, based on a stakeholder engagement program that is not only suited to their local contexts and stakeholders' needs, but that can be both tied to the companies' strategic planning and their commitment to social transformation.

## **Literature Review**

### *The concept of Social Responsibility*

In a world of changing expectations, the perceptions of a corporation's social responsibility have evolved enormously in the last decades. From Friedman's famous article for the *New York Times Magazine* - stating that the only one social responsibility of business is to increase its profits (Friedman, 1970) - to meeting legal compliance, philanthropic giving, and

management based on transparency and credibility- the argument about a company's accountability for its decisions and actions has always been on the table.

In 1998, during its first CSR dialogue in The Netherlands, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development [WBCSD] developed a concept widely used today when referring to a company's role in society. According to it, "Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large (WBCSD, 1998)."

Other CSR definitions share the rationale that ethical behavior and strong business values are at the heart of a company's, and its stakeholders', best interests. In that regard, non-profit Business for Social Responsibility [BSR] defines CSR "as operating a business in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business. CSR is viewed as a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programs that are integrated throughout a business' operations, and decision-making processes that are supported and rewarded by top management."

Today's CSR numbers confirm that companies around the world are at that stage where they are no longer just complying with what is legally required of them, but rather seem to be committing themselves to good corporate citizenship. Although the establishment of social standards is the domain of government and other institutions, companies have come to realize that they too have an obligation to self-regulate and behave in a socially responsible manner. Not only because it is required by society, but because in the long term it comprises a solid and safe base for a business' stability and success.

In the United States CSR was initially driven by responsible business operations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the U.S. government established the "Big Four" regulatory agencies that shaped much of the baseline for responsible corporate business operations: Occupational Safety and Health Administration; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Consumer Product Safety Commission; and the Environmental Protection Agency. These agencies created, and continue to maintain, the standards for socially responsible business practices.

But the sustainability efforts don't end there. Aware that dealing with environmental and societal issues adds value and sustainable competitiveness in a market driven by stakeholders' expectations, most average businesses incorporate a doing-well-by-doing-good philosophy into their CSR investment decisions: making sure that the programs they invest in fit with their business, achieving real business oriented goals, as well as societal ones, and engaging employees and customers.

Malik (2007) stated that the possible scenarios that describe the nature of CSR can be characterized by compliance, integration and transformation. He argues that the progression through the phases is not automatic, but rather, the result of a number of choices at many different levels that need to be continually made by the organization. By incorporating CSR into existing business processes, companies move away from a compliance stage, where they fulfill rules and regulations, and begin to move up to a transformation point where the organization is repurposed.

When talking about Corporate Social Responsibility, it is widely understood that a socially responsible business is one whose:

- products and services contribute to the well-being of society,
- behavior goes beyond the strict fulfillment of the norms and the practices of free market,

- managers behave ethically,
- activities are respectful to the environment,
- development contemplates the support of the communities in which it operates.

In other words, it is an organization whose values are focused on what is best for the key stakeholders, the community and the environment and not just the shareholders.

### *Concept of Strategic Community Involvement*

The literature on Social Corporate Responsibility identifies different spheres where an organization's commitment and efforts to behave ethically and contribute to economic and social development its stakeholders, as well as of the local community and society at large, can take place. Among Community Relations, Social investment and other terms, CSR can be referenced as Corporate Philanthropy.

Even though many scholars have argued the role of corporate philanthropy in business and the real motivating factors behind CSR, and even after several research studies have been conducted proving the lack of impact that corporate giving and CRS programs have on a company's bottom line, the social investment figures of medium to large-scale corporations in the U.S., and around the world, have grown considerably over the years.

The results of a 2002 national Corporate-Community Relations study in the U.S. confirm this fact. According to the survey report "philanthropic donations have been on the rise since the middle of the century, and for the last quarter-century, the rise has been especially rapid, with philanthropic activity increasing by over 1,200 percent overall and nearly 400 percent in inflation adjusted dollars. Private foundations have become a significant force in this distribution of resources." (Guthrie, 2004)

### **Percent Growth in Philanthropy**

*Source: Ford Foundation Yearbook, 2001(as cited in Guthrie, 2004)*

Despite the many attempts to discredit the impact of good corporate citizenship on a firm's performance, many businesses still choose to do the "right thing" by dealing with social issues and the expectations their stakeholders have of them. Aware of the potential advantages to actively contribute to sustainable development initiatives, different sectors of society have come together to address a range of issues affecting communities (Murphy & Bendell, 1999).

A 2001 report, *The Double Bottom Line: Competitive Advantage through Community*

*Investment*, by the Ford Foundation, illustrated that a number of companies in the United States are strategically choosing to reach out to underserved communities, not out of charity, but as a strategic involvement intended to result in a healthier economy and positive business outcomes.

Moss (1999) describes companies moving beyond corporate social responsibility to corporate social innovation as being at the vanguard of the new paradigm. According to Moss, such companies view community needs as opportunities to develop ideas and demonstrate business solutions, to find and serve new markets, and to solve long-standing business challenges.

In that regard, the concept of Strategic Community Involvement represents a way to approach the changing expectations of community members while advancing the interests of both the company and the community. It refers to a wide range of actions – community partnership, employee giving, global community involvement, philanthropy, product and services donations, volunteerism, etc – taken by companies to maximize the impact of their operational activities on the communities in which they have a presence. By aligning business goals with community needs, Strategic Community Involvement creates a cycle of social impact and business value.

Whether referenced as Corporate Citizenship, Corporate Community Affairs or Corporate Community Investment, one key commonality shared by the concepts describing the relationship between organizations and communities is, without a doubt, that they are stakeholder driven. When Basu and Palazzo (2008) state that CSR is “the process by which managers within an organization think about and discuss relationships with stakeholders as well as their roles in relation to the common good, along with their behavioral disposition with respect to the fulfillment and achievement of these roles and relationships”, the focus on relationship building becomes evident. Looking specifically at community relations, not only have the number and substance of expectations changed over the years, but the relationship itself has evolved.

In contrast to the past, when communities passively waited for companies to provide for them, today’s community expectations encompass a wider scope of proactive desires and demands, including dialogue, involvement, leadership and support. Therefore, contributing to sustainability today surpasses the mere donation of technical experience and financial resources that for long ruled the company-community relationship, and requires a mutual commitment to social transformation.

In that respect, when analyzing public-private partnerships, LeFrance & Lehmann (2005) posited that “real and meaningful partnerships can only be established through development of social relations, through commitment and mutual trust and through establishing mutual understanding and consideration.” (p.217)

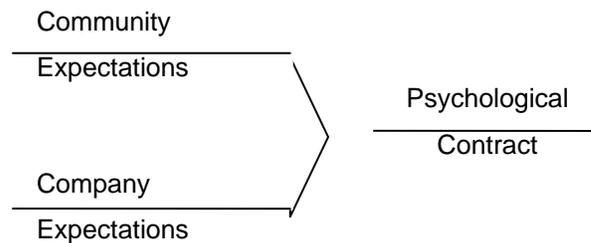
But trust and understanding cannot only be expected of partnerships amongst private companies and international organizations, NGOs and the government. The direct relationship that a company creates with the community where it has a presence or impact, must also be grounded by a mutual sense of trust, transparency, dialogue, commitment and satisfaction.

According to Burke (1999), just as there is a psychological contract of both written and unwritten expectations between a company and its employees, there are explicit and implicit expectations between a company and its community.

There is reciprocity of trust – a common basis, a common set of values, that communities and companies have for each other. There are recognized values that are held in common— a company needs to remain competitive and a community needs to be treated

honestly and fairly—and there will be a mutual attempt to make each other successful in achieving these ends. (p. 5)

### The Psychological Contract



*Source:* as adapted and used by Burke with permission of the Levinson Institute, (1999).

In order to become the “neighbor of choice”, Burke (1999) argues that companies must build sustainable and ongoing relationships with key community individuals, groups, and organizations; manage community issues and concerns; and use community support programs to build trust.

The expectations that companies and communities have for each other may be different in character than those between managers and companies. They are, nonetheless, real. Some are explicit: pay taxes, obey the laws and ordinances in the community, and provide employment opportunities for the residents. At the same time, companies have specific expectations of communities. They expect that communities will provide the infrastructure for the companies’ operations – police, fire protection, and transportation facilities, for example. They also expect an educated workforce. The implicit expectations focus on the intangible and are often part of the values, hopes, and ideals the company or the community has for itself, and these are in continual flux. (p.6)

Similarly, Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee (2002) identified what they called “Corporate Social Initiatives” as an emergent form of a corporate community involvement that, in contrast to earlier stages of CRS, “are connected to the firm’s core values, responsive to moral pressures, based on a firm’s core competencies, and have objectives and clear means of measurement” (p.110).

In Colombia, the field of corporate community involvement is still developing. On the one hand, as in the rest of Latin America, multilateral agencies are providing different kinds of support to businesses so that they can fulfill the expectations of them as corporate citizens. On the other hand, distance and distrust between businesses and communities make it difficult for them to assess their needs, develop plans to address these needs, and learn from the process (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004).

In contrast to global trends, a good part of the engagement sources come from the government, and steadily the private and third sector are playing a more prominent role across the social sphere. The Colombian Center for Corporate Social Responsibility (Centro

Colombiano de Responsabilidad Social Empresarial [CCRE]), reported that the industries that have contributed the most to social investment are government, 20%; utilities, 12%, and paper and cardboard, 11%.

Besides their social investment, somewhat less known is the actual role of businesses in the community, the motives that drive a corporation to engage in socially responsible activities, and the type of engagement they have with stakeholders. According to the CCRE, in terms of CSR, Colombian businesses first analyze their commercial goals or the services they provide, to decide if they can generate social programs that could serve them as a “battle horse” for their performance within a community. Indeed, the analysis unleashes further ideas for actions focusing towards education, health promotion and prevention, nutrition, best practices, environment, culture, recreation, professional and technological growth.

Austin et al. (as cited in Gutierrez & Jones, 2004, p. 153) presents a clear position on the topic – “in practice, the most sustainable ventures occur when utilitarian and altruistic drives are strong and blended. Altruistic motivations alone might not withstand economic downturns; utilitarian drives alone might distance social partners.” – This reflection prompts the question: How can local corporations form relationships with governments, nonprofits and communities, so that the priorities they assign to the social practices, in which they engage, are mutually beneficial for both the community and the business?

### **Understanding Organization-Public Relationships**

Although the study of organization-public relationships as a public relations theory has received great attention amongst scholars (Broom et al., Ledingham, Hon and J. E. Grunig), there is to this day little consensus regarding the OPR construct.

Increasingly, the OPR scholarship includes definitions, dimensions, types of organization-public relationships, maintenance strategies, the importance of stakeholder expectations, and developmental and process models (Ledingham, 2003)

After reviewing the concept of relationship from different perspectives – interpersonal communication, interorganizational relationships, psychotherapy, and system theory – Broom et al. (1997) first suggested that the concept of relationship must be addressed in ways that lead to valid operational definitions for use in both theory and practice. Without explication, Broom et al. (1997) argued, researchers and practitioners alike will continue to use instruments that may not measure the relationships themselves.

Answering the call, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offered the following definition: OPR “is the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well being of the other” (p. 62).

Other definitions include:

Broom, Casey, & Ritchey (1997): “relationships consist of the transactions that involve the exchange of resources between organizations” (p. 91).

Thomlison (2000): a relationship “is a set of expectations two parties have for each other’s behavior based on their interaction patterns” (p. 178).

Huang (1998) defined OPR as “the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (p. 12).

Although there have been different ways of defining the concept, the literature seems to agree that the study of organization-public relationships involves the analysis of (1) antecedents:

things that need to be in line before relationships between organizations and publics can be established, (2) maintenance processes: strategies for building and maintaining the relationship, and (3) outcomes: dimensions of the relationship state or characteristics.

#### Relationship Outcomes

Likewise, along with the construction of a conceptual definition of OPR, several scales have been developed in an attempt to evaluate the success of relationship-building efforts. These measurements are based on relational dimensions, such as: reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding (Grunig et al., 1992); mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction, and relational commitment (Grunig & Huang, 2000); trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Additionally to this group of dimensions, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed the *PR Relationship Measurement Scale*, where longer-term *relationships* with key constituencies are measured by focusing on six components of the relationships that exist. These are:

“Control Mutuality -- The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other.

Trust -- One party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust: *integrity*: the belief that an organization is fair and just ... *dependability*: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do ... and, *competence*: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.

Satisfaction -- The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

Commitment -- The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are *continuance* commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and *affective* commitment, which is an emotional orientation.

Exchange Relationship -- In an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future.

Communal Relationship -- In a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other -- even when they get nothing in return. For most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships.” (p.3)

#### *Relationship maintenance strategies*

Along with the PR Relationship Measurement Scale, as part of their Excellence Study, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed a set of communication strategies for maintaining symmetrical relationships with key constituencies that are likely to produce relationship outcomes. These strategies are widely based on research from interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution theories. According to the authors, the following concepts can be adopted from the interpersonal relationships:

“Access—members of publics or opinion leaders provide access to public relations people. Public relations representatives or senior managers provide representatives of publics similar access to organizational decision-making processes.

Positivity—anything the organization or public does to make the relationship more enjoyable for the parties involved.

Openness—of thoughts and feelings among parties involved.”(p.14)

“Assurances—attempts by parties in the relationship to assure the other parties that they, and their concerns are legitimate.

Networking—organizations’ building networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups.

Sharing of tasks—organizations’ and publics’ sharing in solving joint or separate problems.” (p.15)

From the conflict management theories, the strategies can be as follows:

“Integrative. These approaches are symmetrical because all parties in a relationship benefit by searching out common or complementary interests and solving problems together through open discussion and joint decision-making.

Distributive. These strategies are asymmetrical because one party benefits at the expense of another by seeking to maximize gains and minimize losses within a win-lose or self-gain perspective

Dual Concern. These strategies take into consideration the dual role of balancing the interests of publics with the interests of the organization. Several other dual concern strategies are symmetrical and are the most effective at building and maintaining a relationship in the long term. These are:

1) Cooperating: both the organization and the public work together to reconcile their interests and to reach a mutually beneficial relationship.

2) Being unconditionally constructive: the organization does whatever it thinks is best for the relationship, even if it means giving up some of its positions and even if the public does not reciprocate.

3) Saying win-win or no deal: if the organization and public cannot find a solution that benefits both, they agree to disagree—no deal.” (p. 16)

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to make a sound contribution to local community involvement practices, drawing upon the strategies to develop community relationships and the outcomes of these relationships. To achieve this goal, the study explores the key relational elements of organization-public relationships within the context of three community involvement initiatives from local companies and their relationships with the community. Based on the literature, the study focuses on two research questions:

RQ1. How are community-relationships created and maintained by three companies in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia?

RQ 2: What are the outcomes of community relationships in these case studies?

General Objective:

Analyze how three local companies create and maintain relationships with their communities in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Specific Objectives:

1. To explore the organizations' attitudes towards community involvement.
2. To inventory local corporate practices for building positive relationships with the community.
3. To distinguish how these relationships are perceived by the community.
4. To identify the outcomes of cultivating relationships with the community.
5. To propose a set of communication strategies needed in relationship building.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to analyze how three local companies create and maintain relationships with their communities and to explore the relational outcomes that define the quality of the relationships. The study is based on the cultivation strategies suggested by Hon and Grunig (1999), and the authors' guidelines for assessing relationships between organizations and publics (2002).

Because the review of three cases enables a more general understanding of local corporate community practices and how local organizations relate to their stakeholders by drawing comparisons and explore differences within and between cases, therefore, this research project is a multiple-case study. In a multiple case study, the researcher examines several cases to understand the similarities and differences between the cases. Yin (2003) finds that a multiple case study either, "(a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)" (p. 47). Two qualitative methods will be implemented to investigate the research questions: focus groups with community members and in-depth interviews with the organizations' executives.

Background

The study analyzes three cases of Corporate Community Involvement [CCI]: Promigas (Natural gas service provider) – School of Excellence, Electricaribe (Electricity service provider) – Restart and Argos (Cement manufacturer) – School Infrastructure.

Promigas – "School of Excellence". This initiative seeks the improvement of education quality in selected institutions within low-income neighborhoods. It does so by working with teachers and administrators, through the strengthening of school administration in terms of planning, execution, verification and introduction of curriculum adjustments that can assure better institutional results. Aware of the incidence that the development of language and mathematics skills has in the socio-cultural variables of the students, Promigas, thought it was necessary to design a strategy to improve the ways in which pedagogical work is carried out in the schools that are part of the initiative.

Electricaribe – "Restart": This project seeks to help unemployed, vulnerable people, who possess empirical knowledge in electrical work, have better opportunities of social and economic

development, improve their ability to find a job and undertake initiatives that would allow them to earn an income on their own.

For the company, poverty is directly related to people's level of education and the opportunities they have to participate in the economy. The purpose of this intervention is to grant the beneficiaries part of what is missing, so that they can actively participate in economical and social decisions. Electricaribe believes that the only way in which these groups can come out of poverty is by creating the conditions for their productive incorporation in the economic world. "Reinitiate" was created to alleviate the remarkable restrictions the market imposes on the low-income population to access certain assets and resources required for their complete productive incorporation.

**Argos – School Infrastructure:** Through this program the company offers their products and services for the improvement or building of adequate school environment thereby enhancing the educational level of students. They do so by analyzing the context within the community, their climate, material needed and the legal requirements imposed by the Minister of Education. Argos builds classrooms, school cafeterias, libraries, leisure centers and parks, in the public institutions that have been prioritized by developmental plans in the municipalities where the company has a presence and impact. The program involves the engagement of parents, students, school teachers and administrators through workshops in maintenance and appreciation of the newly built areas. In the year 2007, the company reported the completion of 84 projects, benefiting 50,634 people.

### *Data Collection*

In depth interviews and focus groups will be the primary data collection methods that address the research questions. Interviews will be conducted with companies' executives in charge of public relations / communications / community relations and / or the department where the allocation of responsibility for community involvement lies within the firm. Focus groups will be conducted on community members and the beneficiaries of the firms' corporate community initiatives.

Participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions based on J. Grunig's (2002) questionnaire, with regards to the strategies that the organizations have used to cultivate relationships between the company and community members, and about the type and quality of these relationships.

To address the former, the content of the interviews and focus groups will explore the strategies, techniques, and programs the organizations use to communicate with the community in order to develop and maintain a relationship with them.

The qualitative question to assess the maintenance strategies used by the three companies will focus on the following variables:

- Access— does the company allow members of the community to be part of the decision making processes?
- Positivity— what has the company done to make the relationship enjoyable for community members?
- Openness— what thoughts and feelings does the community share in relation to the company?

- Assurances— what attempts has the company made to assure community members that their concerns are legitimate?
- Networking— in what kind of community networks, if any, has the company engaged itself?
- Sharing of tasks— how does the company encourage the sharing of tasks for the purpose of solving problems within the community?

The questionnaire will also lead to explore whether the communication strategies put in place fall under an integrative, distributive or dual concern – asymmetrical category.

To respond to the second research question, the main content of the interviews and focus groups will focus on participants' perceptions of the four relational elements identified by Hon and Grunig (1999): trust, commitment, control mutuality and satisfaction. Moreover, the analysis will assess the existence of two types of relationship between the firms and community: communal or exchange.

- Trust – What things has the company done to treat community members fairly? (integrity), to indicate that it can be relied on to keep its promises? (dependability), and has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? (competence)
- Commitment – Are there any examples that show that the company wants to maintain a long-term relationship with the beneficiaries?
- Satisfaction – Do community members and beneficiaries of CCI feel satisfied with the relationship that the company has had with them?

To analyze the existence of two types of relationship, whether Communal or Exchange, the questionnaire will look at the perceptions of the community with regards to their welfare.

- Do they feel that the company is concerned about the welfare of the community even if it gets nothing in return? (communal)
- Do they feel that the company gives or offers something to the community because it expects something in return? (exchange)

In order to reach a holistic understanding of this case, published data concerning the community involvement of the firms, such as annual reports on sustainability, social balance reports, etc... and other documentation, will be reviewed as it appears relevant to the purpose of the study.

### *Premise for discussion*

The review of literature and previous studies indicate that the building and maintenance of communal relationships are important when companies are to be socially responsible and add value to society as well as to the business. Effective community relations programs therefore need to meet the needs of both the organization and its key community constituencies.

### **Expected Results**

Based on the cases to be analyzed under the concepts of Community Relations and OPR, this research project seeks to propose a useful framework for building and maintaining positive organization-public relationships between local businesses and their communities in the city of

Barranquilla. The goal is to enable the strengthening of the social initiatives that govern the conducts and motivations of local enterprises that actively chose to be socially responsible.

Along with the above mentioned outcomes, the study attempts to have an academic, social and economic impact, by obtaining the following:

- A better understanding of local community relations practices, particularly with regards to relationship building and maintenance.
- A better understanding of local community perceptions in reference to current corporate community initiatives.
- A greater appreciation for the role of private companies in the social and economic development of the city of Barranquilla.
- A strengthening of public relations research in a local context.

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