

2. **THE JONBENET MURDER INDUSTRY.** Highlights in great detail the constant reportage of hunches, unverified claims, "secrets from sources" & other less-than-factual coverage of this tragic case, including Jeraldo's on-air "trial" wherein a group of totally unknowledgeable celebs found the parents "guilty" of murder.

- Mag's explanation for this self-inflicted insult to journalism: "Media hunger to fill the gap between O.J., Monica & the Next Big Story. Journalists will now reach down for material that by any standard is not news & rely on the work of bottom feeders to fill their own pages & airwaves"

3. **UNETHICAL REPORTING.** Mag disdains the methods of one self-righteous Denver columnist, Chuck Green, who has proclaimed JonBenet's parents guilty – based on tips from cops – even tho official law enforcement & grand juries have been unable to do so.

- "That's how journalism works," he says. "You report the spin that your best sources feed you & that's how you keep them as sources." Asked if he tried to verify the info he says "You try, but you usually can't"
- Retorts U Colo J-prof Michael Tracey: "Boulder law enforcement put a ring in Chuck Green's nose & led him around on a leash. Law enforcement used the media to build a case that law enforcement knew it couldn't construct in court. *The role of the journalist is to assume you're being used, assume you're being lied to, and to double check*"

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Another PR Lesson Unwillingly Taught By W.R. Grace** concerns an alleged coverup of the asbestos content of Zonolite insulation, which it manufactured from the 60s to 80s. As in the tobacco cases, it appears there are internal memos showing the company knew the risk but didn't tell, according to EPA. The reported reason for silence? It might have hurt sales. While the asbestos controversy is a prime example of overzealous & emotional enforcement – it is only dangerous when airborne & breathable, so all the removals from schools & elsewhere probably *increase* the hazard – in today's climate any coverup equals guilt on all counts. Thus, overcoming Grace's notoriety from its Woburn, Mass, chemical spill, made widely known by a book & recently a movie (pr 2/22/99), becomes nigh impossible. **Two strikes & you're out in this unforgiving era.**

¶ **In Every Field, Relationships Rule.** Says Mass. legislator Ruth Balser in a *Boston Globe* study of the rise of women lawmakers: "A lot of what you do in the legislature is developing relationships." She credits her career as a psychologist & experiences as a single mother as good preparation for such relationship-building – an insight for practitioners who lobby. Another insight that can be taken as a prediction why the changing tone of society will put more women in key political (& other) positions is offered by Rep. Anne Paulsen: "(Women legislators) are interested in getting things done, not so much in gaining power." Testosterone's heyday may be ending.

¶ **Good Retort Reverses Negative Publicity Into Laudable Behavior.** Under fire for gene therapy trials in which some patients died, which has now happened elsewhere also, pres of Beth Israel Deaconess Med Ctr (Boston) issued this statement: "We are temporarily halting the trial because *there is a national discourse on this & we would like to benefit from it.*" (emphasis ours). Think positively.

ANOTHER ORGANIZATION APPLIES TENETS OF ANTHROPOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR; STUDY OFFERS AN EXAMPLE

The difference between what people say & what they do is where focus groups, surveys & other conventional research methods fail. Context-Based Research Group (CBR, Baltimore) has joined a number of pr researchers using principles of anthropology to gain richer insights & develop strategies.

- "Traditionally we think of **anthropology** as studying people in some remote part of the world," Brian Lewbart, mktg & com'n dir, told prr. The fact is, anthropology is gaining ground in the business environment, where corporations like Xerox are combining it with public relations for employee programs, consumer strategies & more. CBR, started last summer as a subsidiary of Richardson, Myers & Donofrio marketers, uses anthropology & its product, ethnography, to analyze consumer behaviors
- "Ethnography is basically a study of the structure of how people act," partner Chuck Donofrio told prr. "Ethno' meaning people, and 'graph' – chart or structure"

"When you observe people, you see them doing things that they don't tell you about."

Example: consumer surveys won't indicate that when a shopper walks into a grocery store, s/he heads for the dairy aisle, or the produce aisle, first. These tendencies can influence product design or placement. "Anthropologists are trained to observe behavior & pull information based on the observations. Watching behavior & then talking to subjects about what is observed can give you a better sense of behavior."

One tool of ethnography takes observation a step further: participation. "You go to where they are & take part. Doing things with them gives you another insight." Other tools include having subjects chart their own behavior. "Over the course of a week or a month, that data can show you how this group works, put a structure to their experience," he says. "What we are finding is that we can help clients fit into the lives of the people they're trying to serve."

Ruder & Finn's old Research & Forecasts unit used anthro methods to market apples. The Grunigs' prr *Research* supplement described how feminine research approaches emphasize participant involvement (pr 8/23/99). Frito-Lay & Jansport used anthro research to improve their marketing efforts & product displays (pr 8/16/99).

WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS: A SAMPLE ANTHRO STUDY

In one of CBR's first studies, a retailer of outerwear wanted to find out how urban women connect with the outside environment. Research objectives were:

A) **Defining patterns** of outdoor activity in the audience targeted – 40 women from 4 major cities, categorized into "enthusiasts" or "casual users" of the outdoors



B) **Developing contextual insight** into the connection between these experiences & their choice of outerwear & outdoor gear, with emphasis on product development

METHODOLOGIES. CBR developed rapport by engaging the women in ‘naturalistic’, open-ended interviews. Researchers explained the goals & methods of the project & collected data on occupation, salary & marital status in order to build profiles. Participants were asked to do some of the work:

1. **Describe their lives**, incorporating thoughts about work, leisure, friends, family, responsibilities & weekend vs. workday routines
2. **Discuss how the outdoors fits into their lives**, including where they go to be outdoors, whether they are with others or alone, what preparation is required & how it makes them feel
3. **Talk about the clothing & equipment** they use, what relationship their “outdoors self” has on their everyday work or leisure wardrobe, & how their wardrobe selection relates to both self-image & the perception they believe others have of them
4. **Photo diaries.** CBR provided each participant with a camera for a 2-week period. Participants snapped pics on their commutes to work, on daily walks with their dogs or strolls with their kids, & in their closets to document favorite & perhaps least favorite activewear
5. **1-on-1 semi-structured in-depth interviews** at their homes or other locale chosen by the participant. This goes beyond the reach of traditional focus groups, engaging participants in their own environment where they’re most comfortable. Researchers had the photos in-hand for discussion
6. **Secure web area.** During the interview process, researchers uploaded their field notes to a secure web area where management team reviewed, analyzed & interpreted info

FARMERS’ MARKETS, FIDO, AND COUNTRY CHIC

Distinct profiles emerged showing how women think about & use the outdoors – and the factors influencing their choice & use of outerwear & outdoor gear. “One of

the things we discovered about women in general is that they have a strong affinity for the outdoors, & how they connect with it is very telling,” says Lewbart.

- **In the city, women display a connection with farmers’ markets**, outdoor produce marts & rustic shopping environments where vendors sell everything from potato knishes to dried flowers. “They took pictures of where they had been, & farmers’ markets always popped up. You don’t learn that from a focus group or survey.” This offered the retailer a signal for product placement & the kinds of designs that might appeal to their target public. Also, it showed that the women seek nature & simplicity in an urban environment
- **Another linkage: the dog.** Women in all of the cities connect to the outdoors via walking their dogs & playing with them in parks
- **These women want style & good looks combined with purpose** in their outerwear. “There is a growing market for stylish, casual outerwear,” Lewbart says. “They are seeking functionality, but it doesn’t have to be for hiking”

CBR hopes to expand its service offerings beyond consumer studies to the organizational realm.

FORD SCORES DOUBLE BENEFIT BY HELPING EMPLOYEES GET CONNECTED AT HOME FOR \$5/MONTH, FOR VALUABLE LEARNING

Ford Motor is equipping all of its employees with a computer, printer & Internet use at a nominal fee. “We won’t start delivering the equipment until April,” Edward Miller, mgr, corp news told pr. Already, however, employee response has been very positive. “They’re extremely enthusiastic.” He says the provision is not entitlement & is available to any fulltime employee.

THE SMARTER, THE BETTER

The thinking is that employees will benefit by staying connected via the Internet, and Ford will

benefit by having better-trained, web-savvy employees. “It is clear that individuals & companies that want to be successful in the 21st century will need to be leaders in using the Internet & related technology,” says chrm Bill Ford. “That’s what this program is all about.”

This “showcases how enlightened companies are empowering their employees by making technology accessible,” notes Carleton Fiorina, Hewlett-Packard CEO.

- **“It will get them to be adept at business,”** adds Miller. “We want everyone to understand how the web works, to know how Amazon.com works & how L.L. Bean sells clothes on-line.... He says Ford is not asking employees to work from home, but the company hopes they will learn at home. Internet sales are in the stars for Ford. “We expect it to have a big impact on how people will be shopping for cars.”
- **Employees are asked to pay a nominal fee** – \$5, less in lesser-developed countries – for monthly web usage. The company anticipates some difficulties getting workers in remote parts of the globe on-line, relying on MCI’s UUNET to iron out the problems. Other partners include Hewlett Packard & coordinator People PC (San Francisco).

EVEN MEDIA CRITICS, LIKE BRILL’S CONTENT, ARE ANTI-PR

The redesigned February issue, with a new editor, has as its slogan “Skepticism is a virtue.” Its opening page elaborates:

- *“Skepticism is a weapon.* It deflects spin, propaganda, p.r., b.s., press agents, publicity seekers, hearsay, unnamed sources *and anyone with a hidden agenda.”* (emphases theirs)

One article blasts NYC pr counselor Howard Rubenstein re such clients as George Steinbrenner, Rupert Murdoch, Donald Trump & Leona Helmsley: “If Rubenstein is so devilishly skillful at what the *Times* calls ‘the art of manipulating the public perceptions of clients,’ why does the public perceive so many of his best known clients to be truly dreadful human beings?”

Then it digs into the really bad media actions that are so prevalent today, e.g.:

1. **THE PERJURED MEDIA.** *LATimes* sharing ad revenue from a special issue of its Sunday mag devoted to the Staples Center sports arena with Staples.
 - Author’s conclusion: “It’s not that the deal is such an aberration but, rather, that it isn’t.... The trend is for journalists to work with business-side employees” – of which it cites several examples
 - Sidebar: “As for the blurring of the lines between commerce & content on the Internet: Don’t even get me started”