

5. **Parents are primary, but schools should also teach values.** Many participants say society, especially public schools, should reinforce parents' efforts to teach values. 81% say a very important principle for policy making is that kids be taught the difference between right & wrong at school as well as home. Still, they wave a cautionary flag about the "slippery slope" of conflicts over religion in school
6. **Media contributes to the problem,** most participants agree, but they're also reluctant to get gov't involved. More than two out of three say it's "very important" to reduce violence & sex in the entertainment media, but confusion prevails about how to achieve this. 44% think the media should be made to clean up, even if it risks free speech; 32% are opposed, 24% are unsure. "Most believe that tv, movies and music are all a contributing force," Doble says. "They talk about media as a real problem"

Parents are viewed sympathetically, seen as overwhelmed by forces beyond their control (economics, media, etc.) "Most people believe parents are under terrible pressure," says Doble. "Single parent families, families where both parents work full time...." For this reason, the participants call for business, community, churches, media, to help remedy the problem. (Full report at www.nifi.org.)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Colleges, Universities Eat Huge Piece Of Charity Pie, But New Tax Laws Could Change That.** Philanthropic dollars are being funneled to colleges and other institutions that already have hefty endowments and reap big bucks from pricey tuitions. Meanwhile, organizations aimed at helping the needy, face the threat of bankruptcy. That's the complaint of Curt Weeden, head of Corporate Contributions Academy. In *Philanthropy* magazine, Weeden points out that Harvard has an astonishing \$14.4 billion endowment while Elijah's Promise, a New Jersey soup kitchen, struggles to raise \$250,000 a year to feed homeless people. The two interests are alike in that both are "lumped in along with America's 700,000 or so agencies, institutions, confederations, ass'ns, and other strange bedfellows loosely labeled as 'charitable organizations'" and can wave the deduction in front of donors, foundations, and corporations. Weeden, ex-vp of corp contributions for Johnson & Johnson & author of *Corporate Social Investing*, says a simple change in the federal tax code would funnel more to the needy: allow double deductions for org'ns for the needy. "Give \$1 to Harvard, and get a \$1 write off. Donate \$1 to Elijah's Promise, get a \$2 tax deduction."

¶ **Excellent handbook for anyone with environmental, land use or similar issues** is *Covering Key Environmental Issues*. Because it is a handbook for journalists, could very well help you discern how you will be covered – and Earth Day is next month. Has descriptive chapters on 14 major issues from air quality to wetlands, including sprawl & growth mgmt and business, economics & sustainable development. Lists of relevant gov't & private org'ns for each topic, plus a thoro glossary. (Radio & TV News Dirs Fdn, 202/659-6510; www.rtndf.org)

¶ **US gov't tries once again to motivate behavior with ads** – this time for the Census. \$167 M will be spent on b'cast, print & outdoor, using 12 languages & attempting to tap cultural mores of minority groups, youth & seniors. Ads seen so far are good work. Barriers to be overcome include privacy concerns, not caring, immigration issues. Publicity & coalition efforts are also underway, but ads get the big bucks. *What if this money were spent on an integrated, strategized, grassroots behavioral pr effort?* Is this another political payoff to the media, like the \$2 B anti-drug effort? Or has pr failed to educate Census officials what we could do? Previous federal ad efforts have failed. Every 1% drop in response rate adds \$25 M to cost of tracking down respondents – & response has fallen from 78% in '70 to a predicted 55% this time. Picking up on John Lennon, can we say "Give pr a chance!"

ONE RESULT OF McCAIN CAMPAIGN IS WARNING ON RESEARCH

Of 10 polling outfits attempting to gauge the outcome of the NH primary, not one got within 6 points of the Arizona senator's victory margin, 18.1%. All but 1 were within the margin of error on Bush, the same one was the only one wrong on Forbes – but 4 were off on Gore over Bradley.

Not an impressive record – continuing the misses of previous pre-election polls. What's up?

- The exit pollster says his data show it was skewed by the difference between voters who made up their minds *before* heading to the polls & those who made up their minds *at the last minute*. Any implications for pr research as to whether purchases, e.g., are spontaneous or planned?
- U NH's survey center thinks it was *the unexpected turnout*, since they may not have been captured in polls by failing the screening question about intention to vote

For practitioners, it's one more reminder that research is only a *model of reality* – and changes in the environment or public mood can occur very quickly. Polls (traditional survey research) are no longer the methodology of choice for any use but very long range planning – & then mainly on highly stable issues or topics. (American Ass'n of Public Opinion Research chart & description from prr)

PR FIRM REVENUES WAY UP, STUDY FINDS – BUT CHANGE IN POSITIONING OF FIELD MORE IMPORTANT TO PRACTITIONERS

Council of PR Firms' survey finds increases of 30-50% common, & over 100% occasionally. Tech pr is a driver, of course. But the comment of Xerox's Palo Alto Research Ctr dir is the big verification of what's happening, since it impacts every practitioner – not just firms:

"We're entering an age defined by the economy of attention, in which pr moves from being a tactical afterthought to a strategic forethought"

SCRAP OVER SIZE RANKINGS CONTINUES TO MISLEAD

The biggest or bigger pr firms are not necessarily the best. Big does not mean more skilled – especially when you're comparing the top 25 firms in size which have US billings from \$25 M to \$181 M. Global revenues go as high as \$275 M. Staffs & range of capabilities are broad – but after a point isn't it more of the same?

- **Certainly clients cannot be so shortsighted that they feel bigger makes a difference?** After all, it isn't the names on a firm's roster that matter. It's the people serving *you*. With the big firms increasingly forced to sell commoditized tactical pr on a price basis, size can even be a deterrent. Will you get the attention & service needed unless your project is spending megabucks? And mid-size firms & 1-person shops have their place.



- **Probably it's the American penchant to rank everything.** CPRF's survey uses different financial reporting data than the O'Dwyer survey, so CPRF asked members not to respond to O'Dwyer – & most didn't. Part of the dust up is over what constitutes pr, with O'D viewing it basically as media & traditional pr activities. CPRF allows billings from direct mail, research, events staging & other services to be counted. O'D also keeps an eye out for independent vs. ad-agency owned firms. Almost all the biggies are in the latter category now. (Copy of CPRF study at www.prfirms.org)

SEATTLE MOVEMENT GOES FORWARD, NOW TARGETING PR

Don't think the Seattle anti-globalization demonstrations had nothing to do with your org'n & clients or your profession. Because the goal is a fairer allocation of world resources & respect for workers & the planet, the International Forum on Globalization touches all practitioners. Especially since they're now targeting pr.

Next chapter is a daylong session in DC April 14. Here's the description of one session:

- "Com'n technologies & the Internet were supposed to enhance empowerment & democracy but have instead become the crucial infrastructure for the globalization of corporate commercial & political power. Now in the wake of merger mania, 'information society' is revealed to be centralized, corporatized, hegemonic & globally homogenizing
- "Similar developments among military technology industries – hidden from public view, and exempted from trade rules, subsidy limits & even World Trade Org'n controls – are creating a new global military infrastructure that is designed to protect the new global corporate order"

Theme copy on meeting brochure reads: "The 'Triple Threat' of economic globalization – WTO, IMF, World Bank – all promise a model of development with outcomes (in poverty & overcrowding). Global corporations score record profits at the expense of the environment & the poor." They're global themselves, well organized with many experts & effective activist org'ns involved. Important issue anticipation study since so many issues coalesce here. (More from 888/629-9269)

ONE MORE TIME: WEB IS "PULL" – NOT "PUSH" – MEDIUM

Just a few years ago, the push for "push technology" was on. "It was a channel theory," Steve Andrews of PepperCom (NYC) told pr. "The idea was to just push news onto the desktop." It's the way tv channels work, but for the Internet, it didn't fly. "It didn't work because (with the Internet) people can choose what they want. Pull technology is a more natural model for the medium."

Andrews says the ability to pull customized info of choice is what makes the Internet so attractive & increasingly popular. But...

- "Basically, print is not dead & never will be dead. People like paper, like to touch & feel & hold it in their hand"

The real issue, he told NY/IABC's wired world meeting, is what is driving people to the new media. "Info is delivered in the most exciting & dynamic manner via the Internet." People make a mistake in thinking the Web is a network of computers. "It's not. **It's organic, and it's a network of people.**"

ANOTHER VIEW

A professor falsely named on the net as author of a controversial book says: "I think the damn Internet is the most dangerous thing in the damn world. I get 80 e-mails about this rumor a day."

NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM SEES YOUTH IN MORAL DECLINE, WANT BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES TO PITCH IN

People nationwide fear that US youth are in a state of decline – stemming from substance abuse, violence, teen pregnancy &, most of all, eroding moral standards. In forums across the country, most of about 90 minutes to 2 hours long, National Issues Forums (NIF) brought citizens together to discuss "Our Nation's Kids." Findings indicate a high level of alarm, but also ideas on how to improve the situation.

A DEEPER INSIGHT THAN SURVEYS

Each year, NIF, a network of voluntary groups including library, civic & educational organizations, takes up a different issue, researcher John Doble told pr. "We draw from about 100 forums around the country using a number of methods to find out how people feel before & after the forum." Doble interviews moderators, observes the forums, talks to participants & also uses questionnaires. "The report [compiled annually] always is about people's thinking, what they say after they have had a chance to deliberate for an hour." This provides richer, more reliable data, he says, as opposed to a snapshot of what they say at a given moment in survey research.

This year's findings are based on an analysis of 1,956 participants. Key issues:

1. **Broad decline in young people's basic moral standards.** The participants see drug & alcohol abuse, juvenile violence & teen pregnancy as serious problems, most see them as symptoms of widespread moral decline, lack of basic values, inability to discern right from wrong, & general disrespect of adults & others in authority. In post-forum questionnaires, 81% say they're "very concerned" about lack of moral standards
2. **Business & community have to take more responsibility for youth.** Parent at home is ideal, but economic pressures often make this impossible. Therefore, participants look to business to provide flexible hours, more part-time jobs, & daycare at work. Also, religious organizations, community groups & public schools should provide more structured programs & activities
3. **Prevention activities in parenting of young children is also key.** Initially, participants focused on teens, but later talked about young kids & about how to prevent problems. Suggestions include teaching about prenatal care, nutrition & parenting in high school
4. **Better healthcare for kids, & making sure deadbeat parents pay support.** By a margin of nearly ten to one, participants said gov't should spend as much on kids as it does on the elderly – even if that means raising taxes. Gov't should also be stricter about enforcing laws requiring absent fathers to pay support, 71% believe

"The findings are interesting because they indicate a change," study author Iara Peng told pr. In the past, drug abuse, teen violence & pregnancy were seen as the main concern. "Now, the issue of moral decline has come to the forefront across the country. People see a broad decline of children learning to obey the Golden Rule."