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Submission: Manuscripts are invited in these areas, typed double-spaced on one side of A4 paper only, and should be between 4,500 and 6,000 words. Manuscripts should be presented as electronic copy in MS Word and sent to the Editor via e-mail.

Abstract: An abstract of not more than 200 words should be presented at the beginning of Page 1

Author information: To be presented on a cover page, it should show title of article, academic or professional title, university/institution and department of affiliation, and area of specialization.

Style: Manuscript should be rendered in the APA Manual of Style, 5th Edition. In-text citations are required. References, not bibliographies, should be listed at the end.

Examples:

Books:

Journals:

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The same style should be used for magazines.

Book chapter:

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Abstract

The pervasive idea is that the are functions of requires its adherence or media arguments upon holes in the arguments might be then such as Market equilibrium, the fundamental, trivial, and severe cause it undermines the worth of an argument more, the paper politico-economic time on the

Key Words: Bias, Consumerism, Introduction

It seems to have become that every news report
Relations between Multinationals and Host Communities in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: A Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract
Oil exploration and refining are no longer novelties though the technologies involved may be. Their processes are similar in most countries of the world and are operated mostly by the same multinational companies (MNCs). The host communities even share the same pride of housing such productive and economically viable industry, with high expectations of development. Though the main aim of MNCs is to make profit, this cannot be achieved effectively without a favourable relationship with their host communities. This study examines the relationship between Shell, Chevron and Agip and five host communities (Omoku, Obrikom, Emueremukohvarie, Tisun and Kolokolo) in Nigeria’s Niger Delta from the perspective of the stakeholder theory. The findings reveal that Agip enjoyed a better relationship with its host communities than Shell and Chevron. The study recommends that MNCs should elevate their host communities from the diffused publics to the functional publics’ status.

Key Words: Multinational companies, host communities, community relations, stakeholders

Introduction
It was Milton Friedman who stated that there was no place for social responsibility as a business function. Friedman, a University of Chicago professor, was an American Nobel Laureate economist and a public intellectual whose works are both widely acclaimed and cited. Friedman (1970) asserted that a corporation’s only responsibility is to make money
and sell products so that people can be hired and paid (Seitel, 2007). The discussions of the social responsibilities of business, according to him, are notable for their analytical looseness and lack of rigour. The idea of business having social responsibilities is meaningless. A corporation exists as an artificial person and in this sense may only have artificial responsibilities.

Friedman pursued this notion by stating that social responsibility is synonymous with acting against the best interest of the business. For instance, a business executive may refrain from increasing the price of products so as to contribute to the social objective of preventing inflation, even though such an increase would be in the best interest of the business. As far as Friedman is concerned, that executive will be spending someone else’s money for the sake of general interest. For as long as his “socially responsible” actions reduce returns to stockholders, he is spending their money.

Alexei (2000), in agreement with Friedman’s notion, states that one may wonder why firms should be obligated to give something back to those to whom they already routinely give so much. Contrary to the “enslaved” portrayal of employees, they are typically paid wages and benefits by firms in return for their labor. Customers are not stolen from, but are typically delivered with goods and services in return for the revenue they provide; and rather than being guilty of taking a free ride on public provisions, firms typically pay taxes and obey the law.

This argument, however, fails to factor in the dynamic nature of human relationship and the business environment. First, payment of wages and benefits to employees are relative from one firm to another. If all a firm owes its employees are wages and benefits, such employees can constantly search for better opportunities, thereby resulting in high labor turnover. Second, customers require more than the delivery of goods and services to remain loyal to a firm, particularly in a market where several substitutes abound. In the case of paying taxes and obeying the law in exchange for public provision, no direct contact is made with the public.

There should be a mutually beneficial or win-win situation between employees, maintaining a close relationship with the public is goodwill; and a business executive may refrain from increasing the price of products so as to contribute to the social objective of preventing inflation, even though such an increase would be in the best interest of the business. As far as Friedman is concerned, that executive will be spending someone else’s money for the sake of general interest. For as long as his “socially responsible” actions reduce returns to stockholders, he is spending their money.

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The concept of “stakeholder” was first used by Freeman at the Stanford University in 1960, to its first usage, stakeholders were defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.” Stakeholders are typically categorized into five groups: owners, employees, customers, suppliers, and communities. Each stakeholder group has different interests and expectations from the business, and the business must consider these interests and expectations when making decisions.

MNCs-Host Community Relations

The concept of “stakeholder” was first used by Freeman at the Stanford University in 1960, to its first usage, stakeholders were defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.” Stakeholders are typically categorized into five groups: owners, employees, customers, suppliers, and communities. Each stakeholder group has different interests and expectations from the business, and the business must consider these interests and expectations when making decisions.
There should be a paradigm shift from a transactional relationship to a mutually beneficial one. The major factor that has the potential of retaining employees, maintaining the loyalty of customers and impressing the public is goodwill; and this cannot be achieved through routine activities.

Friedman’s notion of the actual role of business, which is to make profit, has fired up arguments back and forth as to whether more should be expected of businesses in the social sphere. Grace and Cohen (2005) argue that a business comprises people who possess views that are both humanistic and naturalistic. The humanistic view, according to them, is that a deteriorating environment and planet is of no relevance in the sustainability of human life let alone business. The naturalistic view, on the other hand, draws a line between the exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of the fauna and floral for profiteering sake.

The view of Grace and Cohen cannot be ignored considering the fact that a business is useless and defunct without the human factor. If, as a result of the activities of a business, the environment deteriorates, in the cases of pollution and poor waste disposal, a business should not just be contented with paying taxes and paying workers their wages and benefits. Decisive steps should be taken to curb the deterioration. Such a step may not seem to be business oriented, but it will definitely pay off eventually since it is preserving the lives of the people from whom the profit will be derived. If, however, such steps are not taken, it may result in unfavourable relationships with the host communities. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the host communities’ perception of the community relations strategies adopted by the oil companies under study in order to build a favourable stakeholder relationship.

**MNCs-Host Communities Relationship in the Context of the Stakeholder Theory**

The concept of “stakeholder” was first used in 1963 in an internal memorandum at the Stanford Research Institute in the United States. According to its first usage, stakeholders are groups whose support the organization
needs so as to remain in existence. The concept was developed into a theory and championed by Edward Freeman in the 1980s (Freeman & Reed, 1983). By 1983, Freeman and Reed wrote on the comparison between stockholder and stakeholder; Freeman provided more details of the theory in 1984. The theory generally states that a corporation has stakeholders who are generally the groups and individuals that benefit from, or are harmed by, the corporation's actions. The rights of these parties can either be violated or respected by the corporation (Hartman, 2005).

The stakeholder theory identifies the groups and individuals relative to a corporation, describes and recommends methods by which the interests of each party can be catered for by the management of the corporation (Freeman & Reed, 1983). The stakeholder theory is one of the classical theories in public relations.

As Philips (2004) observed, the question of who is and who is not a stakeholder has been discussed for years. Some of the questions that appear relevant to a proper conceptualization here are: Should stakeholder status be a reserved right for constituencies having close relationship with the organization? Should the status be seen to apply broadly to all groups that can affect or be affected by the organization? Should activists, competitors, natural environment or even the media be classified as stakeholders? In an attempt to answer these questions, Freeman & Reed (1983) explain that the narrow definition only includes the groups that are vital to the survival and success of the organization, while the wide or broad definition accommodates all groups that can affect or be affected by the actions of the corporation.

Still in an attempt to identify who the stakeholders should be, Dougherty (1992) and Ray (1999) classify them into four groups: enabling publics, functional publics, normative publics and diffused publics. Stephens, Malone & Bailey (2005) explain that enabling publics provide leadership for the organization and also control the resources that allow it to exist and among them are shareholders, regulatory bodies and boards of directors. The functional publics are those who exchange inputs in an organi-
developed into a theory (Freeman & Reed, 1983). A comparison between the details of the theory and classical theories has stakeholders benefit from, or are these parties can either (Freeman, 2005). The stakeholder theory relative to a corporation is the interests of each corporation (Freeman & Reed, 1983). The classical theories in so is and who is not a question that applies. Should stakeholder relationships be broadly to all groups should activists, commer- classified as stakeholders (Freeman & Reed, 1983). Groups that are vital to wide or broad definition are affected by the ac-

 Stakeholders should be, to four groups: en-

calling publics provide sources that allow it bodies and boards of range inputs in an or-

organization for outputs, such as the employees, unions, suppliers and customers who provide labour or make use of the organization's products and services. Normative publics are those with shared values or similar problems such as trade unions and professional societies. The last group is referred to as the diffused publics, which emerge when external consequences result from an organization's activities; these include the media, environmentalists, residents, and the community.

In a later work, Freeman, Winks & Parmar (2004) elaborate on their previous work by stating that the stakeholder theory is managerial in nature because it reflects and directs how managers operate, rather than primarily addressing management theorists and economists. From the analytical point of view, a stakeholder approach provides assistance to managers through the promotion of the analysis of how the corporation fits into its larger environment (Mayer, 2008). It also encourages the evaluation of how the standard operating procedures of the corporation affect stakeholders like employees, managers and investors who are within the company, and customers, suppliers and financiers who are outside the company.

Freeman (cited in Mayer, 2008) suggests that managers should fill a "generic stakeholder map" with specific stakeholders. This will help the managers to always keep them in perspective, particularly when making important decisions. He emphasizes that a rational manager will not make a major decision for the organization without first considering its implications on each of the stakeholders. The stakeholder theory posits that every legitimate person or group involved in the activities of a firm is a stakeholder for the sake of benefits, and that the priority interest of every legitimate stakeholder is not self-evident (Furneaux, 2006). According to Donald & Preston (1995), the stakeholder theory has the following characteristics:

1. The stakeholder theory is descriptive: it offers a model of the corporation.
2. It is instrumental: it offers a framework for investigating the links
between conventional firm performance and the practice of stakeholder management.

3. It is fundamentally normative: although stakeholder theory possesses the above two characteristics, it is more fundamentally normative. Stakeholders are identified by their interests and all stakeholders are considered to be intrinsically valuable.

It is managerial: it recommends attitudes, structures and practices and requires that simultaneous attention be given to the interest of all legitimate stakeholders.

The existence of an organization depends on its ability to create value and acceptable outcomes for different groups of stakeholders (Jones, 2004). Stakeholders are generally motivated to participate in an organization if the inducements they receive exceed the value of the contributions they are required to make. Different stakeholders use the organization simultaneously to achieve their goals. It is pertinent to note, however, that the viability of the organization and its ability to accomplish its missions of providing goods and services depends mainly on the contributions of its stakeholders.

There are some counterarguments to those of the stakeholder theory, and prominent among them is the stockholder theory, which was popularized by Milton Friedman (1970). This theory actually existed before the stakeholder theory and was, in fact, the argument that led to the reaction that birthed the stakeholder theory; nevertheless, it remains the premise on which critics of the stakeholder theory base their arguments. Contrary to the stakeholder theory, the stockholder theory argues that corporate involvements in philanthropy distorts the market as well as rob the shareholders of their wealth. It insists that the idea of business having social responsibilities is meaningless, because only people can have such. Since a corporation is only an artificial person, it may only have artificial responsibilities.

The stockholder theory projects the separation thesis, which begins by assuming that ethics and economics can be clearly and sharply sepa-
Host Communities ...

The host communities are major stakeholders in the environment and the practice of stakeholder theory possesses a fundamentally normative character. All stakeholders are entitled to the interest of all leaseholders, and all stakeholders are accorded the same rights and duties. Therefore, the practice of stakeholder theory depends on its ability to create incentives for the agents to pursue the goal that is to the interest of all leaseholders. It is pertinent to note, however, that its ability to accommodate different groups of stakeholders is critical to its success. Therefore, the only appropriate goal for modern corporation managers is maximizing shareholder value. Freeman et al. part ways with Sundaram & Inkpen over the latter's single-objective view of the firm which distinguishes the economic from the ethical consequences and values. Their objection is on the ground that it leads to a parochial theory that cannot fully account for the array of human activities.

Freeman et al. offer three main criticisms of Sundaram & Inkpen. First, they insist that the authors misrepresented the stakeholder theory because all views that did not project shareholder maximization were lumped together as part of stakeholder theory. Such views included corporate chartering, unions, consumer interests, care for natural environment, etc. They point out that though the stakeholder theory can be many things, it is wrong to assume that it is everything anti-shareholder. Since shareholders are also stakeholders, bifurcating the world into "shareholder concerns" and "stakeholder concerns" is as illogical as contrasting "apples" and "fruits". According to Freeman et al. (2004, p. 366), Sundaram and Inkpen favour the primacy of shareholder value maximization with a five-point argument:

1. The goal of maximizing shareholder value is pro-stakeholder
2. Maximizing shareholder value creates the appropriate incentives for managers to assume entrepreneurial risks.
3. Having more than one objective function will make governing difficult, if not impossible.
4. It is easier to make shareholders out of stakeholders than vice versa.

In the event of a breach of contract or trust, stakeholders, compared with shareholders, have protection (or can seek remedies) through contracts and the legal system. Their counter arguments are:
The stakeholder theory is decidedly pro-shareholder: values are created for shareholders when they are created for stakeholders. When managers create products and services that customers are willing to buy, when jobs are offered that employees are willing to fill, when relationships are extended that suppliers are eager to have, and when behaving as good citizens of the community, values are being created for shareholders. It is not necessary to posit the two theories as opposed.

The stakeholder theory offers the correct way to think about entrepreneurial risks: According to Venkertaraman (2002), cited in Freeman, Wicks & Parmar (2004), a stakeholder approach enables us to develop a more robust entrepreneurial theory in which the role of entrepreneurial risk is better understood. In practice, as opposed to the world of economic journals, there are often collaborations between managers and stakeholder groups such as customers and suppliers to test new products and services. In fact, customers and suppliers accept some inherent risks in the development of new ideas, products and services.

Having one objective function makes governance and management difficult: having a single function, according to Sundaram & Inkpen (2004), makes the tasks of managers easier simply because it cuts through confusing claims and potential responsibilities accorded managers. The only responsibility of managers is to make money for shareholders. Freeman, Wicks & Parmar (2004), however, insist that though convenient for managers, the view distorts reality and encourages a worldview in which managers exempt themselves from being moral agents who are responsible to a wide array of groups for their actions.

1. It is easier to make stakeholders out of shareholders: this point is considered obvious since shareholders are already stakeholders.

Stakeholders have remedies that shareholders do not have: it is erro-
pro-shareholder: values are created for stakeholders. When customers are willing to buy, when relationships are alive, and when behaving as good agents are created for shareholders. It is opposed.

Direct way to think about entrepreneurship, cited in Freeman, approach enables us to develop a which the role of entrepreneurial opposed to the world of economic entre- between managers and stakeholder to test new products and services. Some inherent risks in the development governance and management according to Sundaram & Inkpen, simply because it cuts through the capabilities accorded managers. The stake money for shareholders, Free- insist that though convenient for encourages a worldview in which moral agents who are responsible.

Out of shareholders: this point is not already stakeholders.

Shareholders do not have: it is erroneous to focus on the derivative suits by shareholders as the only means by which shareholders can be protected. Since the desired condition is for value creation and trade to be self-sustaining, so that parties to the contract can pay the cost of safeguarding that contract, rather than impose it externally on others, the stakeholder approach is the only move of conceptualization.

Lastly, Freeman, Wicks and Parmar close their argument by noting that the impression the shareholder ideologists strive to create is that economic freedom, and therefore, political freedom, are threatened by the stakeholder theory. They insist that this view is fallacious. According to them, “Seeing business as the creation of value for stakeholders and the trading of that value with free consenting adults, is to think about a society where each has freedom compatible with a like liberty for all,” (Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004, p. 368). Value creation and trade are complimentary. Hence, the idea of economic and political freedom being separable should be jettisoned.

The stakeholder theory has been applied to several studies. One of the major studies in this category is “Communication with stakeholders during a crisis: Evaluating message strategies,” conducted by Stephens, Malone & Baily (2005). The study explores message strategies used by organizations in dealing with crises involving technical details. While applying the theory, the authors explain that the nature of the relationship existing between the stakeholders and the organization is a major factor in shaping the response of stakeholders to pressure. They observe that the purpose of communication during crisis is to influence the perception of the public towards the organization as well as to maintain a positive image among stakeholders. It can also be used to restore the company’s image in case it has already been damaged among stakeholders. Stephens, Malone & Baily made use of literature to develop an integrative coding scheme and a parallel set of strategies, which they referred to as technical translation message strategies. Content analysis was adopted for the study and 154 accounts representing 10 different technical crises were analyzed. From the findings of the study, it was suggested that different crisis-
message strategies were used in communicating with different stakeholders. It was also discovered that when technical details were discussed, "Organizations rarely go beyond an attempt to directly state the technical facts with little or no explanation provided to the stakeholders" (p. 1).

The stakeholder theory is appropriate for this study because of its managerial nature. It alerts the corporation to the existence of an array of parties that it is responsible to. In the context of this study, this theory helps oil companies in the Niger Delta to become aware of the fact that there are several individuals and groups that are affected by their actions. Prominent among these parties are the host communities. The host communities are considered to be among the most important stakeholders of the oil companies because they are physically connected to the companies.

Stephens, Malone & Bailey (2005) explain that one of the effective ways to describe the behaviour of organizations is to adequately take into consideration the nature of their relationship with their stakeholders. Hence, the stakeholder theory will enable us to describe the behaviour of Shell, Chevron and Agip after we have evaluated the nature of their relationship with their host communities in the Niger Delta. A cordial or not cordial relationship with the Niger Delta communities will, therefore, give us a picture of how well or badly the selected oil companies have behaved.

Stephens, Malone and Bailey also observe that the management of an organization may consider one stakeholder to be inconsequential one day, and the next day realises that the same stakeholder demands its total attention. This is described by Mitchell, Agel & Wood (1997) as stakeholder salience, which they suggest can shift from time to time. The implication of this for our current study is that if the oil companies consider their host communities inconsequential, and thereby failed to give them due attention, the one sided relationship will result into protests and conflicts. This will, in turn, upgrade the communities to become the oil companies’ most important stakeholders. Following Stephens, Malone & Bailey’s (2005) explanation of the fact that victims may join the functional publics, the conflicts in the Niger Delta have become important because of the scale of their communities from the diffused publics.

Stakeholder theory also pragmatically emphasizes that the management of an organization may consider one stakeholder as worthy of their attention today, only to realize that by tomorrow they are creating values for them that they have emphasized than by the fact that they intended to make more profits. Again, by using the stakeholder theory there is no basis for enmity between the former and the latter. Stakeholders are evaluated in terms of their importance to the interests of the company, but not necessarily as a part of the latter. Social responsibility, unlike the shareholders, is not the only concern of the Niger Delta to realize that by tomorrow they may have losses, such as vandalism. Again, by using the stakeholder theory there is no basis for enmity between the former and the latter. Social responsibility is considered for this study comprised the Eruemuh and Kolokolo communities in Delta State and the Isokwu communities in Rivers State in Nigeria.

Method
Quantitative research method was chosen because of its attribute of sampling the communities in the selected states, thereby in terms of social responsibility. 182 respondents from Eruemuh and Kolokolo, 283 from Omoku and 72 respondents were randomly selected.
Communicating with different stakeholders technical details were discussed. Attempt to directly state the technical details to the stakeholders” (p. 1).

Proprietary for this study because of its relation to the existence of an array of context of this study, this theory to become aware of the fact that are affected by their actions. host communities. The host communities are the most important stakeholders of physically connected to the companies. (2005) explain that one of the effective organizations is to adequately take into relationship with their stakeholders. Able us to describe the behaviour of evaluated the nature of their relationship the Niger Delta. A cordial or not a communities will, therefore, give selected oil companies have been observe that the management of stakeholder to be inconsequential one same stakeholder demands its total shift from time to time. The implications that if the oil companies consider, and thereby failed to give them will result into protests and communities to become the oil companies following Stephens, Malone & Bai-

Stakeholder theory also provides a robust approach to corporate responsibility, unlike the shareholder theory, that parochially considers only the shareholders as worthy of attention. This helps oil companies in the Niger Delta to realize that by creating values for their host communities, they are creating values for their shareholders. This cannot be better emphasized than by the fact that their outputs have been greatly reduced due to the crises in the Niger Delta. If by ignoring their host communities they intended to make more money for their shareholders, it is quite obvious that they have achieved the opposite. The companies definitely have more losses, such as vandalized pipelines and installations, than gains. Again, by using the stakeholder approach, it will be realized that there is no basis for enmity between shareholders and stakeholders, since the former is a part of the latter. Shareholders should work in the interest of stakeholders because their interests will be protected.

Method
Quantitative research method was adopted for this study. Survey was used because of its attribute of sampling the views of a large number of people on a specific subject and also its capacity to be generalized. The population for this study comprised the indigenes of Eruemukohwarin, Tisun and Koloko communities in Delta State and Omoku and Obrikom communities in Rivers State in Nigeria. Shell, Agip and Chevron were selected because of the scale of their operations in the Niger Delta, particularly in the selected states, thereby placing some degree of expectation on them in terms of social responsibility. The sample size was 595, consisting 182 respondents from Eruemukohwarin, 22 from Tisun, 36 from Koloko, 283 from Omoku and 72 from Obrikom communities. The respondents were randomly selected.

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TABLE 1: Respondents’ perception of oil companies’ contributions to community development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company’s Contribution to Community Development</th>
<th>Resident oil company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 595

Findings
In assessing strategies for peaceful coexistence with host communities and oil companies' corporate social responsibilities, respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding the companies’ development efforts in their communities. By development, we mean the establishment of schools, building of clinics/hospitals, provision of water and other similar social amenities. The finding presented in Table 1 indicates that Agip was perceived to have contributed more to community development than Shell and Chevron. Shell, on the other hand, returned its highest percentage among the respondents who claimed it contributed once in a while to community development. Also, of the three oil companies, the highest percentage of respondents believed that Chevron did not contribute to community development at all. A study conducted by Idemudia (2007) revealed that all the Niger Delta villages surveyed expected development benefits from the oil companies as part of their entitlements as host communities. Failure to deliver such benefits automatically engendered hostility from the communities.

TABLE 2: Respondents’ perception of oil companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Positively Influences the Community</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

N = 595

From Table 2, Agip was the least influence on its host communities. The ability to favourably affect the development benefit of its hosts. On the other hand, Shell had the least influence on the community development between Shell and Agip in assessing the impact of their activities on their communities.

TABLE 3: Respondents’ perception of oil companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company fulfils promises</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

N = 595
existence with host community responsibilities, respondents regarding the companies' development, we mean the provision of clinics/hospitals; provision of clinics/hospitals. The finding presented in Table 2 indicated that Shell and Chevron, Shell, on the other hand, were perceived as having the highest percentage of respondents who did not contribute to community development, the highest percentage of respondents who disagreed with the companies' contributions to community development.

### Table 2: Respondents' perception of oil companies' positive influence on their communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Positively Influences the Community</th>
<th>Resident oil company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Shell: 63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Shell: 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Shell: 14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Shell: 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Shell: 8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Shell: 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 595

From Table 2, Agip was perceived to have the greatest influence on its host communities. This means that the company had the ability to favourably affect the communities using its presence to the benefit of its hosts. On the other hand, Shell was perceived as having the least influence on the communities. Though Chevron was in between Shell and Agip in assessment, a look at the table shows that 58.4% of the respondents had a negative perception of its influence on their communities.

### Table 3: Respondents' perception of oil companies' fulfillment of promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company fulfills promises</th>
<th>Resident oil company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Shell: 51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Shell: 13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Shell: 14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Shell: 6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Shell: 13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Shell: 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agip: 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chevron: 100.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N = 595
Table 3 reveals that Agip has maintained its lead among the three companies. It was perceived as having fulfilled its promises by a majority of 54.2%. This result reveals, perhaps, the most valuable factor responsible for Agip's perceived cordial relationship with the communities. The company's readiness to negotiate would have been a waste if it did not fulfill its promises. Chevron was, however, perceived as the least trustworthy, followed by Shell.

Discussion
Over the years, several scholars have emphasized the role of perception in human relationships. According to Perreault & McCarthy (2005), perception is how we gather and interpret information from the world around us. Considering how valuable the perceptions of the relevant publics are to an organization, this study also examines the host communities’ overall assessment of the community relations strategies of the oil companies.

The respondents in this study expressed their views on the oil companies’ contributions to development in their communities. The findings reveal that of the three oil companies, Agip had the highest rating among the respondents who agreed that it contributed to the development in their communities. Three-quarters of the respondents said Shell sometimes contributed to their development while most of the respondents said Chevron did not contribute at all.

Shell was rated highest by respondents who said that it contributed to community development once in a while. Notwithstanding the strategies adopted by Shell, this finding suggests that the communities have not seen enough of the company’s efforts. This may raise the question as to whether or not the communities can ever see enough of the oil companies’ efforts. The Agip situation may provide an answer to this, since the perception of the respondents of the company is mostly positive.

The findings in this study also show the respondents’ views of the oil companies’ influence on their communities. Agip was considered to have had a positive influence on the communities while opposing views were held of Shell and Chevron. The determinants of the success of companies are no exception. The significant publics to function of community perceptions mostly form the support or disrupt corporate activities. So far, a large percentage of the relatively influence the communities influenced the communities positively.

Respondents also assessed the companies’ ability to keep promises. The entire process of the ability of both parties to keep promises should be more so for the oil company than the other significant publics to function of the company’s effort. More than half of the respondents said the company did not keep promises for Agip, more than half of the respondents said Shell did not keep promises, which was the highest percentage. Generally, it can be concluded that Agip was perceived to be far better in keeping promises than Shell and Chevron. We also discover that Agip enjoyed a better relationship with their host communities. Consequently, it is likely that the perception of the respondents of the company is mostly positive.

In this study, we set out to compare the oil companies’ influence on their communities and their host communities. Based on the finding which states that the nature of the importance of the stakeholder and the organization is likely to withstand more pressure in...
maintained its lead among the three companies. It fulfilled its promises by a majority, followed by Shell, perceived as the least trustworthy, and Agip, perceived as the most valuable factor in its relationship with the communities. The failure of the companies to fulfill their promises would have been a waste if it did not reflect their failure to establish trust in the communities. The findings emphasize the role of perception in the development of the oil companies. The findings from the world around us. The perceptions of the relevant publics are to an extent the host communities' overall assessment of the oil companies. Respondents who rated their views on the oil companies by assessing their ability to contribute to the development in their communities. The findings showed that Agip had the highest rating among the three companies. More than half of the respondents said Shell sometimes kept to its promises, while more than half of the respondents claimed that Shell never kept to its promises. As for Agip, more than half of the respondents claimed that it usually kept to its promises, which was the highest percentage among the three companies. Generally, it can be concluded that most of the respondents perceived Agip to be far better in keeping promises than Chevron and Shell.

In this study, we set out to describe the behavior of Shell, Agip, and Chevron by taking into consideration the nature of their relationships with their host communities. Consequent on the findings of this study, we see that Agip enjoyed a better relationship with its host communities than Shell and Chevron. We also discover that Chevron was perceived as the least responsible to its stakeholders because of its minimal contribution to community development, less positive influence on the communities and failure to fulfill promises. Based on the perspective of the stakeholder theory, which states that the nature of the relationship existing between the stakeholder and the organization is a major factor in shaping the response of stakeholders to pressure, this study concludes that the stakeholders are likely to withstand more pressure in relation to Agip than Shell and Chevron.
ron. Hence, Agip is likely to enjoy a better stakeholder relationship than the other two companies.

**Conclusion**

If we reflect on the initial use of the term “stakeholder” in 1963, it will be apparent that the existence of an organization depends on the various groups it interacts with. This implies that without the support of those groups, the organization may slip out of relevance, or at worst, become defunct. Organizations must strive to keep the support of these groups without losing the confidence of their investors.

According to Stephens, Maione & Bailey (2005)’s classification, the host communities of the MNCs belong to the diffused publics which only emerges when external consequences result from the companies’ activities. However, the companies ought not to wait until there are conflicts before proper attention is given to the communities. A “withdrawal” of the community would deprive the companies of its location. Hence, the communities should be elevated to the level of functional publics because they actually have inputs in the organization in terms of land, natural resources and goodwill. For these reason, the host communities are entitled to outputs from the MNCs.

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