

An Overview of Public Relations Theory

Management Perspectives in Public Relations

The field of public relations has progressed far from the research tradition, which primarily focused on production of messages, campaigns, and mass media effects on audiences (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) have provided grounds for the re-conceptualization of public relations. They defined public relations as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (p. 7).

Furthermore, J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed a model of strategic public relations management. Their strategic public relations management theory encompasses much of the foundational knowledge in public relations strategy, including the situational theory of publics¹ and models of public relations.

The Excellence Study

Considered as a monumental study in public relations, the excellence study can be seen as an integration of strategic management theories of public relations into a greater whole. Funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation, a team of six researchers (J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Repper, and White) began their research by addressing the question posed: How, why, and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives? In addition to the original question of organizational effectiveness, they added

¹ Developed by J. Grunig, situational theory is a theoretical framework that allows identification of strategic publics. The situational theory of publics consists of two dependent variables, active and passive communication behavior, and three independent variables, problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement. Through combination of these dimensions, J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) found consistent types of publics, all-issue publics, apathetic publics, single issue-publics, and hot-issue publics (see J. Grunig, 1997 for an extensive review of the theory).

what they called the excellence question: How must public relations be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute most to organizational effectiveness? (J. Grunig, 1992a, p. 5)

The IABC team first started to develop a theory of value of public relations by reviewing theories of business social responsibility, ethics, and conflict resolution. They asserted that public relations has value to the larger society as well as to specific organizations. To further identify the value of excellent public relations, they examined previous research on excellence in management and searched for the meaning of organizational effectiveness. The IABC team concluded that organizations are effective when they choose and achieve goals that are important to their self-interest as well as to the interests of strategic publics in their environment (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992, p. 86). They argued that, by helping organizations build *relationships* and by resolving conflicts between the organization and its strategic publics, public relations departments contribute to organizational effectiveness. Through a combination of survey research and qualitative research, they identified 14 generic principles of excellent public relations, which they later consolidated into ten.

The following are the ten generic principles J. Grunig and his colleagues suggested (Vercic, J. Grunig, & L. Grunig, 1996):

1. Involvement of public relations in strategic management. An organization that practices public relations strategically develops programs to communicate with strategic publics, both external and internal that provide the greatest threats to and opportunities for the organization.

2. Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management. In effective organizations, the senior public relations person is part of or has access to the group of senior managers with greatest power in the organization.
3. Integrated public relations function. All public relations functions are integrated into a single department or have a mechanism to coordinate the departments. Only in an integrated system of public relations is it possible for public relations to develop new communication programs for changing strategic publics.
4. Public relations is a management function separate from other functions. Many organizations splinter the public relations function by making it a supporting tool for other departments such as marketing, human resources, law, or finance. When the public relations function is sublimated to other functions, it cannot move communication resources from one strategic public to another as an integrated public relations function can.
5. Public relations unit headed by a manager rather than a technician. Communication technicians are essential to carry out day-to-day communication activities. However, excellent public relations units must have at least one senior communication manager who conceptualizes and directs public relations programs.
6. Two-way symmetrical model of public relations. Two-way symmetrical public relations is based on research and uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. Excellent public

relations departments model more of their communication programs on this model than on the press agency, public information, or two-way asymmetrical models. However, they often combine elements of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models in a “mixed-motive” model.

7. A symmetrical system of internal communication. Excellent organizations have decentralized management structures that give autonomy to employees and allow them to participate in decision making. They also have participative, symmetrical systems of internal communication with employees that increases job satisfaction because employee goals are incorporated into the organizational mission.
8. Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations. Excellent programs are staffed by professionals—people who are educated in the body of knowledge and who are active in professional associations and read professional literature.
9. Diversity embodied in all roles. The principle of requisite variety (Weick, 1969) states that effective organizations have as much diversity inside the organization as in the environment. Excellent public relations includes both men and women in all roles, as well as practitioners of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
10. Organizational context for excellence. Excellent public relations departments are nourished by participative rather than authoritarian cultures, activist pressure from the environment, and organic rather than mechanical management structures. (pp. 37–40)

Over the years, the excellence theory has been tested and supported through studies by several researchers (for example, Kaur, 1997; Rhee, 2002; Shrout, 1991; Vercic, J. Grunig, & L. Grunig, 1996). Most of its theoretical components have been extended and incorporated into the recent development of relationship management theory. In particular, the two-way models were directly applied to J. Grunig and Huang's (2000) relationship management model as maintenance strategies, which I will discuss in detail in a later section.

In this study, I attempted to identify communication structures and processes important for internal and external relationship building processes. In this regard, theories of excellence that identify organizational structure for effective organizational communication provided useful insights. More specifically, principles closely related to structure, such as organization of the communication function, internal communication system, and organizational context, are relevant to this study. Although not a principle related to structure, I also included the two-way models of public relations principle, because it is related to the cultivation strategies for relationships. I also focused on the dominant coalition's support principle because I believe much of an organization's structure and process is greatly affected by the key decision makers of an organization. In the following, I will further discuss these principles, along with recent developments in organizational psychology and organizational communication.

Empowerment of Public Relations Function

Dominant coalition refers to "the group of senior managers who control the organization" (J. Grunig, 1992a, p. 5). The excellence study maintained that because the dominant coalition makes the organization's key strategic decisions, the senior public

relations practitioner should have a seat in top management meetings or at least direct reporting relationships to senior managers (J. Grunig, 1992a). Unless the public relations function is empowered by the dominant coalition and included in the strategic decision making process, it cannot enact its role as a counselor, who helps the organization to consider the issues of the organization's strategic publics (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier, 2002).

Dozier and L. Grunig (1992) pointed out that the dominant coalition also can affect the way public relations functions are structured. By citing L. Schneider's (aka L. Grunig, 1985) research, Dozier and L. Grunig explained that according to the power-control theorists, the dominant coalition within an organization seeks structures that optimize its self-interests in power and control. Scholars also explain that the dominant coalition's view on public relations will affect an organization's choice of public relations models (J. Grunig, 1992b; L. Schneider, 1985; Spicer, 1997). For instance, J. Grunig explained that an organization's symmetrical or asymmetrical worldview would guide the selection of public relations models.

In sum, the dominant coalition's support is critical for effective public relations in many aspects. The level of the dominant coalition's support for public relations will affect the way a public relations function is structured, the extent to which public relations participate in the strategic decision-making process, and the selection of public relations models.

Integrated Public Relations Function

In search of the normative structure for effective public relations functions, the excellence researchers conducted an extensive organizational literature review. According

to Dozier and L. Grunig (1992), the public relations function can be understood by using open-systems theory. The basic idea behind the open-systems theory is that an organization exists in an environment, and organizations adapt and change according to their surrounding environments. Organizations have vertical structures, which reflect hierarchical location, and horizontal structures, which reflect the segmentation of responsibilities within a function or a department.

Using these concepts, Dozier and L. Grunig (1992) suggested that public relations should be understood as a component of the adaptive subsystem. They asserted that public relations should be placed high in the organizational hierarchy in order to participate in strategic decision-making that affects the organization's internal and external relationships with publics. To garner stronger presence within the vertical structure, the public relations function should be integrated into a single department, which would enable efficient use of scarce resources.

In summary, Dozier and L. Grunig (1992) proposed that a public relations function should be integrated within a single department. They asserted that through such integration, public relations practitioners can seek power through acquiring hierarchical authority, control of resources, and network centrality,² eventually contributing to organizational effectiveness.

Two-way Models of Public Relations

In order to provide better understanding of the two-way models described in the excellence study, I will briefly review theories on models of public relations. The first

² Network centrality means to be at the right place at the right time within the organization. If a department performs activities more critical to survival and growth of the organization, it is likely that the department will be perceived to be more important than other departments (Dozier & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 412).

four models of public relations were developed in an effort to describe the different ways public relations is practiced by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984).

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) described typical ways in which public relations is practiced by using two dimensional combinations of directions of communication—one-way versus two-way, and purposes of communication—asymmetrical versus symmetrical. The model of *press agency* describes propagandistic public relations that seeks media attention in any way possible. Practitioners of this model use a one-way, source-to-receiver communication model. The *public information model* is a truth-oriented approach to public relations. The practitioners strive to provide accurate information to the public, but they do not disclose unfavorable information voluntarily.

In the *two-way symmetrical model*, communication is balanced in that it adjusts the relationship between the organization and its publics through negotiation and compromise. The practitioner of this model uses planned communication to manage conflict and to improve understanding with publics. It uses research to facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics. In the symmetrical model, “understanding is the principal objective of public relations” rather than one-sided persuasion (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 289). The *two-way asymmetrical model* is characterized by unbalanced, one-sided communication. Practitioners of this model use social science theory and research on attitudes and behaviors to persuade publics to accept the organization's point of view or to behave as the organization wants.

L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002), explained that symmetrical public relations also can be described as *mixed motive public relations*. It is based on game

theory that Murphy (1991) introduced to public relations. The mixed motive model refers to the phenomenon of public relations people being motivated by both their loyalty to their organization and by the publics affected by behaviors of the organization that employ them. Overall, J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) argued that the two-way symmetrical model of communication is the normative model and is an ethical approach to organizational effectiveness more than other models of public relations.

Reconceptualization of public relations models. The models of public relations have been researched extensively. The most fervent discussions have been related to the alleged over simplification of the four models and the practicality of the two-way symmetrical model. More recently, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) asserted that the public relations models should be reconstructed. They developed a theoretical framework for the models emphasizing four dimensions: 1) direction of communication—direction could be one-way or two-way; 2) purpose of communication—purpose could be symmetrical or asymmetrical; 3) ethical versus unethical communication—according to J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996), ethical theories based on teleological/utilitarian theories and deontological theories underlie the debate on ethics in public relations; 4) mediated communication—public relations is acknowledged widely as a practice of “mediated” communication, which can be defined as communication behavior via mass media (Huang, 1997)—or interpersonal communication—practitioners try to establish lasting personal relationships with key individuals in media, government, or political or activist groups (J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Huang, Lyra, & Sriramesh, 1995).

Several scholars (Huang, 1997; Rhee, 1999; Sha, 1999) have succeeded in describing a general picture of an organization's public relations strategies by using these dimensions. The dimensions of communication provide more flexible ways of looking at complex public relations practices than the four models. The models theory is an integral part of relationship management theories as they are incorporated into cultivation strategies. Further discussion of relationship cultivation strategies will be provided in the later part of this chapter.

Internal Communication System and Organizational Culture

In this study, I was interested in exploring the employees' role in relationship management and how the quality of employee-organization relationships affects their interaction with the publics. The internal communication principles discussed under the excellence study provided insights in this regard. I will discuss together the contextual principles with the internal communication principles as they are conceptually closely related to each other. In this research, among the contextual variables suggested I focused on the participative culture variable.

Through an extensive literature review of internal communication theories developed in organizational communication and organizational psychology, J. Grunig (1992b) pointed out the lack of an integrative general theory of internal communication. J. Grunig maintained that employees are among the most important strategic publics of an organization and thus employee communication should be a part of an "integrated and managed communication program—that is, public relations" (p. 532).

According to J. Grunig (1992b), internal communication research was primarily carried out by the organizational communication scholars, which resulted in great

improvement of theory on interpersonal and group communication within organizations.

However, there has not been a great deal of interaction between the public relations scholars and the organizational communication scholars interested in internal communication.

J. Grunig (1992b) further explained that for organizational psychology scholars, communication was a secondary variable that affects their main interests in human relations such as job satisfaction, productivity, or superior-subordinate relationships. Organizational sociologists, on the other hand, focused on the structural issues surrounding the organization; and communication was not on their research agenda. J. Grunig proposed developing an integrative internal communication theory by adopting relevant theories of these fields. He argued that in order to understand how internal communication makes an organization effective, we need to look into the nature of communication systems, organizational structure, and organizational culture.

J. Grunig (1992b) found that throughout several research traditions in organizational communication and organizational psychology, symmetrical concepts such as trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, or feedback are repeatedly discussed. J. Grunig observed that organizational communication and organizational psychology scholars often disregarded structural issues. He explained that, as in organizational sociology, structural issues should be included in understanding internal communication management. He stated that an organization's structure and communication system are intertwined. J. Grunig considered the communication system to be a part of organizational structure; thus, he advocated viewing communication as a product of organizational structure. Furthermore,

he explained that organizational structure is caused not only by strategy, size, technology, and environment but also by factors such as power and culture.

Organizational scholar Robbins (1990) argued that an organization's structure depends largely on the dominant coalition's decisions to maintain and enhance its power and control. J. Grunig (1992b), however, pointed out that power can be used in symmetrical ways, to increase power of everyone in the organization. He described this type of power use as empowerment. J. Grunig theorized that empowered organizations would be more likely to practice excellent public relations.

Culture also has been one of the central factors many organizational psychologists and communication scholars used in explaining the cause of organizational structure.

Within the excellence study, two types of organizational cultures were identified. One is authoritarian culture, which is characterized by centralized decision-making power at the top, conflict among different functions in pursuit of self-interest, little flexibility for employees' innovativeness or participation, treatment of employees just as workers, and resistance to ideas from outside the organization. The other is participative culture that supports team work and collaboration among different functions, treats an employee as a whole person and not just as a worker, and is open to ideas from the external and internal environment. J. Grunig (1992b) hypothesized that authoritarian culture will foster asymmetrical communication and participative culture symmetrical communication. J. Grunig explained that an organization's culture and environment affect who will become power holders within the organization. The power holders—the dominant coalition—also choose a structure and concomitant communication system for an organization (p. 566-567).

J. Grunig (1992b) maintained that employees are critical constituencies in the internal environment, who can either constrain or enhance the organizational mission. In this regard, a symmetrical internal communication system that facilitates employees' satisfaction with the organization is "the catalyst if not the key to organizational excellence and effectiveness" (J. Grunig, 1992b, p. 569). Based on his reviews, J. Grunig proposed the following three propositions:

Proposition 1: Excellent systems of internal communication reflect principles of symmetrical communication.

Proposition 2: Symmetrical systems of communication make organizations more effective by building open, trusting, and credible relationships with strategic employee constituencies.

Proposition 3: Good relationships with employee constituencies are indicated by high levels of job satisfaction, especially organizational job satisfaction. (p. 559)

Most recently, the excellence team published complete results of the study as *Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organizations: A Study of Communication Management in Three Countries*. In this book, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) reported empirical research findings on internal communication, culture, and structure. As for organizational culture, the IABC team found through quantitative and qualitative research that participatory culture is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for public relations excellence. In other words, excellent public relations can occur even in authoritarian cultures. However, participative culture was found to provide more supporting environment for excellent public relations than authoritarian culture.

According to L. Grunig et al. (2002), the IABC team also investigated the relationship between internal communication variables and public relations excellence. The team measured asymmetrical and symmetrical internal communication, correlated them with organizational structure and culture variables. L. Grunig et al. reported that organizations with organic structures³ possess symmetrical internal communication systems and participative cultures. On the other hand, organizations with mechanical structures³ have asymmetrical internal communication systems and authoritarian cultures. However, the team found only a moderate correlation of culture and the internal communication system with overall communication excellence.

Organizational Effectiveness

In this study, I did not attempt to fully explore the concept of organizational effectiveness. However, literature on organizational effectiveness is reviewed to inform the study. According to Kalliath, Bluedorn, and Gillespie (1999), efforts to identify the causes of organizational effectiveness have occupied many organizational scholars. There are different ideas about how one should define and conceptualize organizational effectiveness.

In public relations, the IABC team provided the most comprehensive review of literature on organizational effectiveness. The IABC team adopted Robbins' (1990) description of four major perspectives on organizational effectiveness: goal-attainment, systems perspective, strategic constituencies, and competing values. Robbins' description is still widely used in recent organizational study literature (for examples, see Herman & Renz, 1999; Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999; Rojas, 2000).

³ According to Dozier and L. Grunig (1992), organic organizations are small in scale but high in complexity; and mechanical organizations are large-scale and low-complexity structures.

The *goal attainment approach* assumes that organizations have goals, which can be converted into measurable objectives. Relevant data can be collected and analyzed to evaluate organizational performance (Herman & Renz, 1999). However, this approach has been criticized because an organization may have conflicting goals and choosing an inadequate goal will hamper organizational effectiveness (Robbins, 1990; Rojas, 2000).

The *systems approach* emphasizes the interaction between an organization its environment and among organizational subsystems (Robbins, 1990). L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Ehling (1992) explained that systems theory provides a useful framework for conceptualizing organizational effectiveness in public relations. L. Grunig et al. stated that under the systems theory, key role of public relations is to build and maintain relationships with strategic publics in the environment. They added that systems theory explains how public relations departments can contribute to organizational effectiveness. However, L. Grunig et al. pointed out that systems theory alone cannot explain how public relations can contribute to effectiveness.

The *strategic constituency perspective* can be seen as an extension of systems theory. According to Robbins (1990), this approach “proposes that an effective organization is one that satisfies the demands of those constituencies in its environment from whom it requires support for its continued existence” (p. 62). The strategic constituency approach has been adopted by the proponents of the management perspective in public relations. L. Grunig et al. (1992) explained that “strategic constituencies...may be called stakeholders (Freeman, 1984) or simply publics, most common in the literature of public relations” (p. 76).

Robbins (1990) explained that the strategic constituencies perspective is problematic because of the difficulty of separating the strategic constituencies from the larger environment, rapid change in the environment, and the difficulty of identifying the expectations that strategic constituencies hold for an organization (p. 67). However, as L. Grunig et al. (1992) maintained, these are problems public relations has been addressing over the years. For instance, S. Bowen (2000) aptly described how situational theory can help identify the strategic constituencies within the environment. Environmental scanning suggested by J. Grunig and his colleagues (Dozier & L. Grunig, 1992; J. Grunig, & Repper, 1992; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002) can address the second problem of rapid change in the environment. The third problem of constituency expectations also has been addressed by public relations scholars such as J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992, 1996). They have long been suggesting systematic research on external publics' opinion and incorporation of the research data in the organizations' decision-making process.

The *competing values approach* is what Robbins (1990) calls an integrative framework of organizational effectiveness. Robbins explained that with the competing values approach, “the criteria you value and use in assessing an organization’s effectiveness—return on investment, market share, new-product innovation, job security—depend on who you are and the interests you represent” (p. 68). In other words, depending on the evaluator, the criteria can be quite different.

However, proponents of the competing values approach argue that these diverse preferences can be consolidated (Robbins, 1990). Through series of research, Quinn and his colleagues identified the three value continua of organizational effectiveness: flexibility-control (FC), internal-external (IE), and means-ends (ME) (for historical

development, see Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Their approach is often referred to as the “competing values framework (CVF).” Cameron and Quinn (1999) later consolidated the continua into flexibility-control (FC) and internal-external (IE). Kalliath, Bluedorn, and Gillespie (1999) explained:

The F/C continuum represents the way organizations handle their internal components while simultaneously meeting the external challenges of competition, adaptation, and growth...The I/E continuum represents how well the organization manages the demands for change arising from its environment while simultaneously maintaining continuity. (p. 144)

In the CVF model, the combination of the two continua produces four quadrants: The human relations quadrant results from the flexibility-internal axis; the open systems quadrant results from the flexibility-external axis; the rational goal quadrant from the external-control axis; and the internal process quadrant from the internal-control axis. Advocates of the CVF approach believe that contents of these quadrants can explain most organizations’ value orientations (Quinn & Cameron, 1999).

Organizations that focus on people, teamwork, participation, and empowerment tend to be dominant on the human relations quadrant. Values such as flexibility, growth, innovation, and creativity are important in organizations dominant on the open systems quadrant. Organizations that emphasize efficiency, performance, task focus, and productivity are dominant on the rational goal quadrant. Centralization, routinization, stability, and predictability are highly valued in organizations dominant on the internal process quadrant (Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999; Quinn & Cameron, 1999; Robbins, 1990).

Robbins (1990) explained how CVF can be operationalized in practice. First, you identify the strategic constituencies, then you need to identify the relative importance each of the constituencies put on the different sets of values by conducting interviews with constituency members. By plotting the cumulative results on the CVF model, organizations are able to see areas where strategic constituencies agree and disagree in their evaluations of the organization and to determine areas for improvement. CVF is valuable in that it acknowledges the multiple criteria for evaluation of organizational effectiveness (Robbins, 1990, p. 76).

After reviewing organizational effectiveness literature, L. Grunig et al. (1992) concluded that an organization is effective if it achieves the goals it sets for itself. According to the excellence team, organizations exist in an environment, and that environment consists of many groups, such as employees, communities, governments, consumers, investors, and the media. J. Grunig and Repper (1992) explained that public relations scholars call these groups “stakeholders or publics” while organizational theorists call them “strategic constituencies” (pp. 125–126). These publics can affect organizations by supporting or opposing the organizational goals and missions (J. Grunig, 1996, pp. 6–7).

Following this line of thinking, the IABC team theorized that organizations are effective when they choose and achieve goals that are important to their self-interest as well as to the interests of strategic publics in their environment (J. Grunig, 1996, p. 7). They argued that, by helping organizations build relationships and by resolving conflicts between the organization and its strategic publics, public relations departments contribute to organizational effectiveness. Similarly, proponents of relationship management

theories also maintain that an organization is effective when it builds long-term, positive relationships with its strategic publics (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). According to these scholars, an organization will be able to garner support for its activities by building long-term, positive relationships with its strategic publics, which eventually will be conducive to achieving its goals.

Relationship Management Perspectives in Public Relations

Researchers of the excellence study suggested early on that in order for an organization to achieve its goals, building long-term, positive relationships with strategic publics is important (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992). However, it was not until the last few years that relationship building and management of relationships with publics emerged as the key research interest in public relations.

Twenty years ago, Ferguson (1984) argued that the relationships between an organization and its key publics should be the focus of public relations research. J. Grunig (1993) maintained that practitioners must be concerned about behavioral relationships rather than just focusing on symbolic relationships between organizations and key publics.

According to Ledingham and Bruning (1998), the relational perspective reconceptualizes public relations as a “*management* function that uses communication strategically” (p. 56). Bruning and Ledingham (2000) explained that the relational management perspective moves public relations practice away from “manipulating public opinion through communication messages” to combination of “symbolic communication messages and organizational behaviors to initiate, nurture, and maintain mutually beneficial organization-public relationships” (p. 87).

Definition of Organization-Public Relationships (OPR)

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) were among the first to come up with a definition of organization-public relationships after an extensive literature review of interpersonal communication, psychotherapy, interorganizational relationships, and systems theories. Broom et al. reported that these relationship studies adopted notions of relationships that combine subjective perceptions of the participants with qualities of relationships independent of the participants. Broom et al. concluded that systems theory provides a useful framework to understand relationships and suggested the following definition:

Organization-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization-public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time. (p. 18)

Broom et al. (1997) explained that under systems theory, there are antecedents that lead to formation of relationships. They proposed perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors as antecedents. Broom et al. maintained that relationships have consequences such as goal achievement, dependency, and loss of autonomy. For Broom et al., relationships are measurable concepts that are separate from the perceptions held by parties in the relationships. Many public relations scholars take similar positions with Broom et al. on defining organization-public relationships (J. Grunig and Huang, 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined organization-public relationships as “The state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard” (p. 62). Ledingham and Bruning’s definition of relationships is quite narrow in that it excludes negative relationships that can develop. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) explained that an organization-public relationship occurs when there are organizational behaviors that have consequences on publics or when publics’ behaviors have consequences on an organization.

However, in a recent study, Vercic, Ruler, Butschi, and Flodin (2001) argued that at least in Europe, it is hard to find significant conceptual differences in “what one sees as communication” and “what another [use] the word relationships for” (p. 379). Vercic et al. (2001) explained that communication itself is understood as a specific kind of behavior, and results of a Delphi study of European practitioners revealed the lack of dualism between communication and relationships. To Vercic et al.’s claim, L. Grunig and J. Grunig (2002) responded that communication is the process that leads to relationships, and the two are separate concepts.

Another characteristic of the relationship literature in public relations is that scholars have not yet explored how the other end-of the OPR spectrum, external publics, conceptualize and experience organizational relationships from their point of view. It is often the case that scholars use quantitative surveys that impose certain constructs of OPR on participants. As Aldoory (2001) pointed out, more research that recognizes publics’ views within the public relations processes is necessary. Research on how external publics understand and define organization-public relationships is necessary in

order to develop better relationship theories. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) also pointed out the need for coorientational knowledge, which takes into consideration both parties' side of the story in a relationship.

Relationship Constructs

Many researchers have put effort into developing relationship constructs. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) suggested relationship concepts, antecedents of relationships, and consequences of relationships in their three-stage model of relationships. Bruning and Ledingham (1998) surveyed literature in interpersonal communication and social psychology and identified five dimensions of relationships: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) further developed relationship antecedents, maintenance strategies, and outcomes of relationships that address the state of relationship itself.

Relationship antecedents. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) explained that “sources of change, pressure, or tension on the system derived from the environment” (p. 94) give rise to relationships. They observed that most studies of antecedents of relationships are derived from resource dependency theory and exchange theory. Broom et al. explained that resource dependency theory stipulates that relationships form in response to an organization's need for resources. As for exchange theory, relationships are defined “in terms of voluntary transactions and the mutuality of interests and rewards” (p. 91).

However, J. Grunig and Huang (2000) argued that resource dependency theory and exchange theory may not be adequate for explaining relationships between organizations and non-consumer publics. J. Grunig and Huang explained that change

pressures from the environment may have little to do with resources or with exchanges.

Depending on specific situations and behavioral consequences on specific publics, J.

Grunig and Huang argued that antecedents of relationships are situational. They

suggested taking into consideration consequences that multiple publics and organizations

have on each other as situational antecedents of relationships. J. Grunig and Huang

(2000) specifically suggested use of environmental scanning to identify strategic publics

with which organizations need to build relationships.

Relationship cultivation strategies. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) were among the first to develop maintenance strategies for relationships in public relations. Maintenance strategies are drawn from the theories of models of public relations, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) developed a preliminary list of maintenance strategies, based on J. Grunig and Huang's (2000) maintenance strategies for OPR. Most recently, J. Grunig (2002) renamed the maintenance strategies as cultivation strategies. He defined cultivation strategies as "communication methods that public relations people use to develop new relationships with publics and to deal with the stresses and conflicts that occur in all relationships" (p. 5). From this point forward, I will use the term relationship cultivation strategies in place of relationship maintenance strategies.

According to Hon and J. Grunig (1999), public relations professionals have accumulated communication strategies for the maintenance of relationships with publics. Hon and J. Grunig proposed a selective set of most effective communication strategies that are likely to produce relationship outcomes.

Several strategies were adopted from interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution theories:

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. Either party will answer telephone calls or read letters or e-mail messages from the other. Either party is willing to go to the other when they have complaints or queries, rather than taking negative reactions to third parties.

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.

Assurances—attempts by parties in the relationship to assure the other parties that they and their concerns are legitimate. This strategy also might involve attempts by the parties in the relationship to demonstrate they are committed to maintaining the relationship.

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. Examples of such tasks are managing community issues, providing employment, making a profit, and staying in business, which are in the interest of either the organization, the public, or both. (Hon and J. Grunig (1999, p. 14-15)

From the conflict management theories, three categories of strategies were adopted.

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. The goal is a win-win solution that values the integrity of a long-term relationship between an organization and its publics.

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. Tactics include trying to control through domination, argument, insistence on a position, or showing anger. Other forcing strategies are faulting the other party, hostile questioning, presumptive attribution, demands, or threats. Distributive strategies impose one's position onto that of an adversary without concern for the adversary's position.

Dual Concern. These strategies have particular relevance for public relations because they take into consideration the dual role of balancing the interests of publics with the interests of the organization. These strategies also can be called mixed-motive or collaborative advocacy. (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p. 16)

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) segmented dual concern strategies into asymmetrical and symmetrical. When an organization's interest is emphasized over that of the public or vice versa, it is asymmetrical. These strategies include:

Contending. The organization tries to convince the public to accept its position.

Avoiding. The organization leaves the conflict either physically or psychologically.

Accommodating. The organization yields, at least in part, on its position and lowers its aspirations.

Compromising. The organization meets the public part way between its preferred positions, but neither is completely satisfied with the outcome. (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, pp. 16-17)

Symmetrical strategies include the following:

Cooperating. Both the organization and the public work together to reconcile their interests and to reach a mutually beneficial relationship.

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.

Saying win-win or no deal. If the organization and public cannot find a solution that benefits both, they agree to disagree—no deal. A strategy of no deal is symmetrical because it leaves open the potential to reach a win-win solution at a later date. (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.17)

Lastly, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) suggested the notion of *stewardship* from public relations research on development or institutional advancement. Hon and J. Grunig explained that the concept of stewardship recognizes “the strategic value of previously established relationships to future public relations efforts” (p. 17). Four elements of stewardship were adopted as maintenance strategies:

Reciprocity. The organization demonstrates its gratitude for supportive beliefs and behaviors.

Responsibility. The organization acts in a socially responsible manner to those who have supported it.

Reporting. The organization meets legal and ethical requirements of accountability.

Relationship nurturing. The organization accepts the importance of supportive publics and keeps them central to the organization's consciousness. Providing information and involving publics are key to the organization's work. (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p. 17)

Relationship outcomes. The concept of relationship outcomes was first introduced by Huang (1997) to public relations. According to Huang (1997), the quality of organization-public relationships resulting from public relations practice can be represented by trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, and relational satisfaction. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) outlined the four relational outcomes as follows: Trust—one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party; control mutuality—the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another; commitment—the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote; and satisfaction—the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. They also suggested indicators of these outcomes, which provide evaluative measures for quality of organization-public relationships. According to J. Grunig and Huang (2000), organization-public relationships are successful “to the degree that the organization and publics trust one another, agree on

who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (p. 42-43).

However, as several scholars (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) have pointed out, a problem with the measurement of relationship outcomes is the fact that most measures are based on one party’s perception of a two-party relationship. Broom et al. and J. Grunig and Huang called for development of coorientational measures that reflect each party’s perceptions of the relationship as well as what they believe the other party’s perception of the relationship to be. As discussed in previous section of this chapter, one of the major purposes of this study was to understand how external publics understand and evaluate relationship building processes.

Types of relationships. Most recently, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) reported two types of relationships identified in the psychology literature: communal relationship and exchange relationship. Communal relationship describes the kind of relationship in which both parties involved are concerned for the other’s interest. In contrast, in an exchange relationship, a party is willing to give benefits to the other because it expects to receive benefits of comparable value from the other. According to Hon and J. Grunig (1999), it is the communal relationship that public relations programs should opt for. Communal relationships are important if organizations are to be socially responsible and to add value to both society and clients.

Through her examination of psychological literature and research on multinational corporations in China, Hung (2003) identified other types of relationships. These included exploitive relationships, contractual relationships, manipulative

relationships, covenantal relationships, and symbiotic relationships. By citing Clark and Mills (1993) research, Hung described exploitive relationships as one in which one side takes advantage of the other. In contractual relationships, interactions between parties are limited to agreed-upon terms of the relationship (Bennett, 2001). Hung explained that a manipulative relationship arises “when an organization, with the knowledge of what publics want, applies asymmetrical or pseudo-symmetrical approaches to communicate with publics to serve its own interests” (p. 21).

According to Bennett (2001), in a covenantal relationship, both sides commit to a common good, openly exchange opinions, and provide opportunities for input and criticism. Hung (2003) stated that a symbiotic relationship occurs when organizations realize “their interdependence in the environment [and] work together with certain publics with the common interest of surviving in the environment” (p. 21).

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) also suggested different types of relationships. Based on survey research that used trust, openness, involvement, investment, commitment, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, and mutual understanding as dimensions of relationships, they found three underlying factors: professional relationship, personal relationship, and community relationship. Professional relationship essentially describes the transactional nature of a relationship in which both parties are interested in the exchange of resources. Personal relationship dimension describes how the respondent of the survey evaluated the organization’s concern for his or her interest. The third dimension, community relationship, describes the organization’s concern for its surrounding communities. Ledingham and Bruning suggested that instead of an overarching concept of a broad relationship, organizations should design strategies to

Rhee, Y. (2004). The employee-public-organization chain in relationship management: a case study of a government organization. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park. 45

maximize the benefit experienced by both parties involved in these different types of relationships. According to Ledingham and Bruning, this may enhance public relations effectiveness when managing OPR.