ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE EMPLOYEE-PUBLIC-ORGANIZATION

CHAIN IN RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT:

A CASE STUDY OF A GOVERNMENT

ORGANIZATION

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This dissertation examined the critical roles that employees play in an organization's relationship-building process with its publics. By conducting an in-depth case study of a government organization's exemplary community relations programs, the researcher explored links among three focal concepts: employee-organization relationships, employee-public relationships, and organization-public relationships. Field research was conducted over the course of seven weeks. Data were collected through long interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Based on the findings of this study, a normative public relations theory of integrative internal and external organizational relationship management was proposed.

The findings suggest that employees who have positive employee-organization relationships (i.e. employees who have high level of commitment) and those who are capable of using symmetrical cultivation strategies contribute significantly to the development of positive organization-public relationships. The study also found that when the external publics have positive interactions and develop trusting individual relationships with employees, they tend to evaluate the overall organization positively. In other words, when employees have positive employee-organization relationships and employee-public relationships, external publics who interact with those employees tended to develop positive organization-public relationships.

The study also found that employee empowerment can occur through employees' participation in public relations programs for external publics. Employees in this study believed they were acting as "the ears" of the organization and that they were contributing to the betterment of the organization and the community at the same time. Employees also developed personal networks with other employees through participating in public relations programs, which contributed to the building of an internal community. The study showed that public relations programs that tap into the intersection of internal and external publics contribute to the simultaneous development of positive relationships within and between both arenas. Visible leadership, continued dialogue, listening, face-to-face communication, and educational communication were newly identified as significant strategies effecting the development of positive organization-public relationships.

In conclusion, this dissertation proposes that in order for public relations to enact its role as an integrated relationship management function for both the internal

and external publics, it should be organized according to the principles outlined by the excellence theory and practice symmetrical communication.

THE EMPLOYEE-PUBLIC-ORGANIZATION CHAIN IN

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT:

A CASE STUDY OF A GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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CHAPTER I: PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTION

Overview

In recent years, relationships between an organization and its publics have

been the focal interest in public relations research and practice (Bruning & Ledingham,

2000; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). Developing

relevant measurements is one of the major areas of research; and several scholars have

successfully identified indicators such as trust, control mutuality, commitment, and

satisfaction that could measure the quality of organization-public relationships (Huang,

2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

However, it is still unclear how organization-public relationships are initiated,

built, and maintained in real life (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; L. Grunig, 2000). In

this study, I argue that employees who interact with publics play a crucial role in the

organization-public relationship-building process and that exploration of their role

provides insightful information for advancement of relationship theories. Through use

of qualitative methods, this study attempted to identify possible sources of positive

organization-public relationship outcomes from the viewpoints of employees and

publics who come in contact with each other.

The main purpose of this study was to explore the nature of links among

employee-public relationships, employee-organization relationships, and organization-

public relationships, in a real-life setting. Ultimately, development of a normative

theory of integrative internal and external relationship management was attempted.

More specifically, I sought answers to the following questions: 1) How does the

quality of employee-organization relationships affect the quality of interaction

between employees and publics? 2) How does the quality of employee-public relationships affect the quality of organization-public relationships? and 3) How can public relations as a management function contribute to effective management of internal and external relationships of an organization? Figure 1 summarizes key concepts explored in this study.

1. Employee-Organization Relationship (EOR)
2. Employee-Public Relationship (EPR)
3. Organization-Public Relationship (OPR)
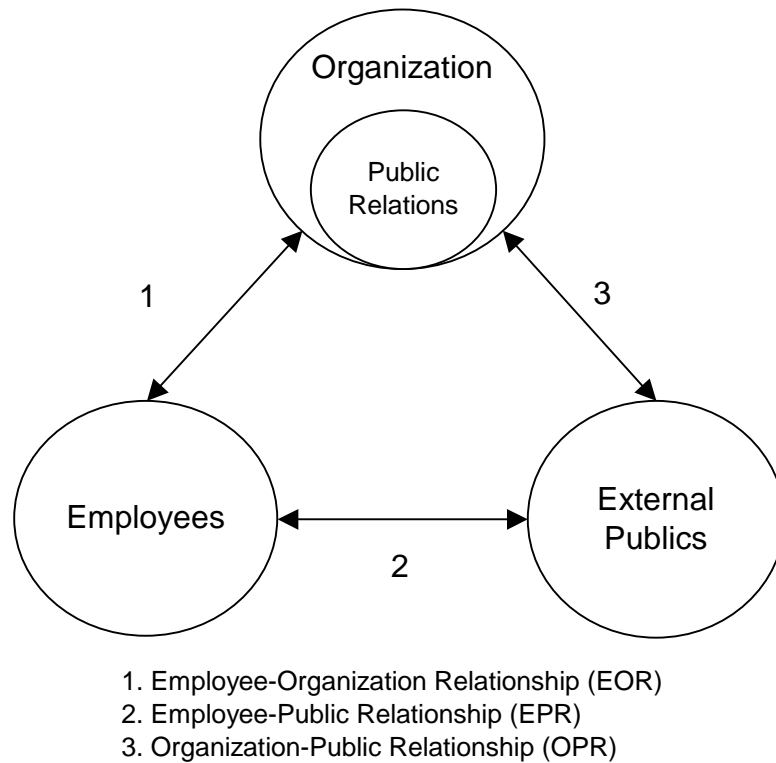
Figure 1. Key Concepts

Results of this study could provide guidance to organizations interested in building external relationships more effectively through employee participation. The results also could help organizations to track and evaluate their internal communication to build better employee relationships and identify opportunities for improvement. Scholars and practitioners who are interested in the impact of

employee-organization relationships and employee-publicrelationships on organizational outcomes may find results of this study useful.

Locating the Researcher

As a qualitative researcher, I agree with Kirk and Miller's statement (1986) that a researcher seldom is a "neutral observer" (p. 51). In constructivist philosophy there is no objective research. A researcher's epistemological orientation, cognitive idiosyncrasies, feelings, and personal background are bound to affect the way he or she observes and interprets data. Before I begin this study, I would like to discuss what I bring to this study as a researcher.

I am a South Korean woman who has a high level of education. For the last six years, I have been trained as an academician and have developed a keen interest in theories of public relations, business management, cross-cultural communication, and organizational psychology. Professionally, I have worked for several organizations in two countries that include a mid-size fashion company, a state university, a multi-national public relations firm, and a conglomerate.

My specific interest in the topic of this study stems from my academic and professional experiences. As D'Aprix (1986) observed, most people in modern society are destined to work for some sort of institutional organization "that is bigger and more powerful than they are—either individually or as a group" (p. 1). Quality of work-life directly affects that of life outside of work. If indeed it is the case that most of us are employees or stakeholders of organizations, our relationships with organizations are critical issues in our lives. The big question for me throughout my personal experiences in both academic and professional organizations was the

following: How should communication be managed in order to help achieve higher levels of satisfaction and fulfillment for both employees and other stakeholders of an organization? I came to believe that public relations theories, in particular of relationships and symmetrical communication, could provide ways to answer this question. I consider this research as a step forward that I am taking to realize my life-goal—making peoples' lives better by using my knowledge and skills in public relations.

The Problem and Rationale for the Study

Recently, public relations has been redefined as a relationship management function. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) maintained that the relational perspective replaces "the traditional view of public relations primarily as a communications activity" and reconceptualizes public relations as a "*management* function that utilizes communication strategically" (p. 56).

Relationships have been at the center of attention in several disciplines. General business management, marketing, and organizational psychology scholars tend to focus on customer relationships. In contrast, public relations scholars argue that it is important to build relationships with other strategic constituencies as well for an organization to be effective. However, few public relations scholars have paid attention to employee publics. Wilson (1994, 2000), Ledingham and Bruning (2001), Hon and J. Grunig (1999) were among the few public relations scholars who pointed out the need for inclusion of employees within the relationship management research agenda. Frontline employees who often deal with external publics on a day-to-day basis have not been studied extensively. As Morgan and Hunt (1994) asserted, it is

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possible to think that publics interact with employees and not with an organization. Some marketing scholars further argue that it is not possible to have a relationship with a company but that customers build relationships with individual employees (Butcher, Sparks, & Callaghan, 2002).

In public relations literature, little is known about how individual employees engage in the relationship-building process. In this sense, understanding the relationship building process at the individual employee level may provide insightful information for development of better relationship management theory. Public relations scholars have been arguing that the field needs research that investigates how relationships are initiated, built, and maintained in a real-life setting (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; L. Grunig, 2000). I believe that exploring the role of employees in the relationship-building process could provide some answers to this problem.

Another theoretical void within relational research in public relations is the fact that few researchers have looked into how the other end of the organization-public relationships spectrum, the external publics, conceptualize and experience organizational relationships. As Aldoory (2001) explained, we need more public-centered research, which recognizes publics' role in public relations. In this regard, there is much need for understanding of how external publics understand and define organization-public relationships. At which point do external publics perceive they have relationships with an organization or an employee? What characterizes a mutually beneficial relationship, and what are the criteria for evaluation? These are some of the questions this study will pursue.

Davis (2001) explained that scholars tend to focus on either internal or external publics. He argued that it is necessary to simultaneously study both internal and external publics to generate better theories of relationship management. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) also argued that a coorientational approach that opts for understanding relationship management from the viewpoints of two parties involved in a relationship is necessary. By conducting qualitative interviews with both employees and external publics, this research attempted to gain such coorientational knowledge in relationship management.

Recent developments in organizational studies also call for further research on employees. In business management, marketing, and industrial psychology, scholars have found empirical research evidence suggesting that the quality of relationships organizations have with their employees can affect customers' satisfaction with the organization greatly and, furthermore, organizational performance such as profits (Czaplewski, 2001; B. Schneider, 1990; B. Schneider, White & Paul, 1998). This line of research, often referred to as the "employee-customer-profit chain" (Rucci, Kim, & Quinn, 1998) or "linkage research" (B. Schneider, D. Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holocombe, 2000), has generated much interest in the field and practice of organizational studies. Many organizational scholars argue that employee communication or internal communication is important in realization of the employee-customer-profit chain.

However, few organizational scholars have adopted theoretical frameworks to develop a normative model of integrative communication management. In addition, current organizational studies tend to neglect non-consumer publics. As a discipline

that specializes in the management of communication between an organization and its strategic publics, I believe public relations theories and practices have much to offer.

Theoretical Framework and Terminology

I reviewed interdisciplinary literature that dealt with the links among employees, publics, and organizational performance in order to build a theoretical framework for the study. The literature review can be categorized into two large sections. The first section deals with relevant public relations theories, particularly the excellence and relationship management theories. Literature on organizational effectiveness and organizational climate or culture from other disciplines that are concurrent with the excellence theories are discussed within this section. The second section is comprised of non-public relations literature that proposed concepts or empirical research evidence of the employee-customer-profit linkage. Employee commitment or loyalty, internal marketing, and communication competence emerged as relevant concepts through reviewing business management, organizational psychology, marketing, and organizational communication literature.

In this research, as Ledingham and Bruning (1998) maintained, I define public relations as a "*management* function that utilizes communication strategically" (p. 56) to develop relationships. In this study, the term "publics" is reserved for the external publics. With that said, I elaborate on how I differentiate employee-public and employee-organization relationships from organization-public relationships.

Organization-Public Relationships (OPR)

In public relations, OPR is conceptualized as a status of connection or association between an organization and its publics. According to Broom, Casey, and

Ritchey (1997), OPR is "represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics" (p. 18). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined OPR 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). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) explained that an organization-public relationship occurs when there are organizational behaviors that have consequences on publics or when the publics' behaviors have consequences on an organization.

In this research, I define OPR as follows:

An organization-public relationship (OPR) is a connection or association between an organization and a public that results from behavioral consequences an organization or a public has on the other and that necessitates repeated communication.

Employee-Organization Relationships (EOR)

Whereas the concept of OPR refers to relationships between the organization and its external publics, EOR refers to the relationships between an organization and its internal publics, the employees. As employees are often times bound by contracts with organizations, it is possible to think that they may have different criteria for evaluating the quality of relationships. Or, it may be that employees put different emphasis on the dimensions of relationships than external publics. For instance, in business management and organizational psychology research, organizational commitment has been considered as the most important factor in building positive relationship with employees (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mowday, 1998). In this study, I focus on exploration of the commitment dimensions in EOR.

In this research, I define EOR as follows:

An employee-organization relationship (EOR) is a connection or association between an organization and individual employees that necessitates repeated communication.

Employee-Public Relationships (EPR)

In this research, the employee-public relationship (EPR) specifically refers to the individual-level relationships that develop between employees and external publics. I take Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) perspective and conceptualize EPR as follows:

An employee-public relationship is a connection or association between an employee and a member of the public mainly resulting from interpersonal communication that occurs because of behavioral consequences an organization or the public has on the other.

In exploring employee-public relationships, I mainly resort to J. Grunig and Huang's (2000) dimensions of relationships—trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment.

Internal Communication

Internal or employee communication has long been regarded as a part of the public relations function. Wright (1997) maintained that public relations can contribute to successful employee communication only when it helps organizations build good relationships with employees. In this study, I apply relationship management concepts to employee communication. Theories of excellence that deal with internal communication will be reviewed and incorporated. In addition, I also review and

synthesize relevant organizational psychology and human resource management theories.

Organizational psychologists and human resource management scholars have proposed that it is necessary to generate an internal culture that emphasizes open, two-way communication in order to build positive relationships with employees, which will lead to positive relationship building with external publics (B. Schneider, D. Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holocombe, 2000). They also argued that employees need foundational support in forms of an appropriate reward system, training, and development (B. Schneider, White, & Paul, 1997, 1998).

Community Relations

In this research, a government organization and its community relations practice is studied. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) said that community relations programs are "specialized public relations programs to facilitate communication between an organization and publics in its geographic locality" (p. 267). Spicer (1997) also saw the community as an organization's "immediate physical environment" (p. 152) with which public relations practitioners have to develop links. I also define community relations as a specialized area of public relations in this study.

The term "community" is defined in the social science and communication literature as a "locality—people grouped by geographic location" and as a "nongeographic community of interest—people with a common interest, such as the scientific community or the business community" (J. Grunig & Hunt 1984 , p. 266). According to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), the second definition of community essentially is the definition of a public. J. Grunig and Hunt explained that the two

types of communities usually overlap and most communities will contain many publics. However, in this study, external public interviewees will mainly come from members of the organization's geographical community.

Organizational Effectiveness

In this study, I do not attempt to fully explore the concept of organizational effectiveness. However, relevant theories will be reviewed to delimit the meaning of the term. As discussed previously, current organizational researchers are finding empirical evidence that employee-customer relationships have positive effects on organizational effectiveness, which they primarily define as achievement of financial goals of an organization.

In this research, organizational effectiveness is defined in non-financial terms. For public relations scholars who support relationship management theories, public relations helps make an organization more 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 will eventually be conducive to achieving its goals. In this study, I also define successful relationship building with the internal and external publics as an important component of organizational effectiveness.

Selection of Participants and Methodological Consideration

A government organization and its employees and community publics are the participants of this study. The participant organization is an exemplary case of how to use employee involvement in its community relations practice. In addition, the

organization was an appropriate case for exploration of the research questions posed because this research attempted to investigate relationship management between an organization and its non-consumer publics.

In this study, I attempted to understand the complex interrelationships among different variables within a real-life context rather than studying specific variables isolated from the context. I sought to gain understanding from the viewpoints of employees, based on the assumption that employees who interact with publics have valuable knowledge and experiences that can help us to understand the relationship-building process. In this regard, qualitative methods were appropriate.

I used multiple qualitative methods. However, my primary source of evidence came from interviews with participants. I collected in-depth interview data from managers, employees, and members of external publics. Documentation obtained from the organization were also analyzed to identify patterns (Yin, 1994) in the data. Observational data were collected for further understanding of the real-life organizational setting relevant to the study. A detailed discussion of methods will follow in a later chapter.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this research, I submitted appropriate documentation for review by the Human Subjects Committee of the Department of Communication and the Internal Review Board of the University of Maryland. Issues of confidentiality, potential benefits the organization would get from participation, and time commitment of participants were explained in the informed consent form (see Appendix B). In addition to this procedure, I took several ethical issues into consideration. At the outset

of the study, I contacted my participant organization via electronic mail. The mail contained information about my identity as a researcher, purpose of the study, and methods (see Appendix I).

At the outset of the research, I was given permission by the lab to at least disclose its identity to my committee members. Permission to reveal the organization's name was given after I left the research site but before anyone in the organization had read the dissertation. Prior to conducting personal interviews, I asked for permission to record the session. No participants were forced to participate or disclose information. Further discussion of ethical issues will be provided in the methodology chapter.

<center>Significance and Contributions of the Study</center>

This study is significant because it provides empirical data on how organizations develop and manage relationships with their strategic publics within a real-life context. In particular, results of this study should be useful to researchers and practitioners alike who are interested in employee relations and its further implications for organization-public relationship building.

This study explored what constitutes a long-term, positive relationship from viewpoints of both employees and external publics. Therefore, it should provide useful insights to scholars who are interested in the evaluation of organization-public relationships. The research dealt with different external publics, who have quite different interests in the organization. In this regard, the results may be extended to provide insights on how organizations should measure or evaluate the effectiveness of their public relations efforts when they have multiple public relationships. In addition, the study contributed to the expansion of the public relations body of knowledge by

integrating business management, marketing, organizational communication, and

organizational psychology theories.

CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUALIZATION

The purpose of this study was to explore the links among employee-organization relationships (EOR), employee-public relationships (EPR), and organization-public relationships (OPR) and contribute a normative theory of integrative internal and external relationship management to the public relations body of knowledge. In this chapter, I attempt to describe assumptions I bring to the study and locate research problems within a theoretical framework through review of relevant literature. I will identify gaps in previous research, which I hope this study will fill. This study will draw major concepts from theories of relationship management and excellence in public relations. Relevant concepts and research results from business management, marketing, organizational psychology, and organizational communication will be discussed and incorporated to inform and provide guidance for the study.

In the first section, I begin with an overview of public relations theories to put the study in context. In this section, I discuss excellence theory and principles relevant to the study in detail. I continue to build on the excellence principles by discussing concurrent literature on organizational climate and organizational effectiveness identified in other disciplines. The first section will conclude with a discussion of relationship management theories in public relations.

The second section reviews non-public relations theories on the employee-public-organizational performance link. Theories of employee loyalty, organizational commitment, internal marketing, and communication competence are drawn from

business management, organizational psychology, marketing, and organizational communication literature.

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 publics[1] and models of public relations. In this chapter, instead of trying to discuss the entire body of knowledge in public relations, I will cover the theories most relevant to this study.

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

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[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).

(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 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 agentry, 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 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 agentry* 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

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[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).

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—thatis, 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 at 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 structures[3] possess symmetrical internal communication

systems and participative cultures. On the other hand, organizations with mechanical

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[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.

structures[3] 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 Climate

In the following, I discuss recent developments in organizational psychology

on organizational climate as it relates to the findings of excellence study. Among

research traditions in organizational psychology, one of the major lines of research

focuses on contextual factors surrounding employees. In particular, research on

climate and culture for service organizations has received much attention recently.

B. Schneider, Gunnerson, and Niles-Jolly (1994) differentiated climate from

culture. B. Schneider et al. explained that culture "refers to the broader pattern of an

organization's mores, values, and beliefs" (p. 18). On the other hand, climate is the

"atmosphere that is perceived by employees to be created in the organizations by

practices, procedures, and rewards" (p. 18).

The concept of climate was introduced to social psychology in the late 1930s.

Scholars such as Katz and Kahn (1966) specifically argued that the "conditions

(atmosphere, climate) created in the workplace for employees can have important

consequences" (as cited in B. Schneider, D. Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holocombe, p. 23,

2000). Throughout the 1960s, climate research flourished. Organizational

communication scholars also adopted the climate concept. For instance, Falcione,

Sussman, and Herden (1987) conducted an extensive review of the climate literature,

proposed the concept of communication climate, and explored its relationship with

organizational outcomes. However, as J. Grunig (1992b) observed, they concluded

that communication climate accounts for only parts of variance of organizational

outcomes such as job satisfaction. This is somewhat similar to what IABC study found

about culture and public relations excellence. Some scholars criticized that the

extensive inclusiveness of the organizational climate caused it to become an

amorphous construct (B. Schneider, 1990). The climate research seemed to be going

out of fashion, but a new stream of research started to emerge.

B. Schneider and his colleagues (B. Schneider,1990; B. Schneider & D.

Bowen, 1985; B. Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998) conducted a series of studies

exploring the relationship between employee experiences of service climate and

customer experiences of service climate. Their research demonstrated a significant

link between employees' experiences and customers' experiences of service climate. It

was found repeatedly that when employees reported the existence of a service

imperative in their organization, customers also reported they received high quality

service. Furthermore, the research extended to the issue of bottom-line outcomes

resulting from customer satisfaction. According to Schmidt and Allscheid (1995),

employee attitudes and employee and customer perceptions of service quality all have

been shown to be related to profitability of an organization (see B. Schneider, 1990 for

a review).

Backed by empirical evidence, climate research within the context of

employee-customer relationships started to flourish. Instead of laying out a direct

Organizational Climate Experienced by Employees		Indirect Experience of Organizational Climate by External Publics		Attitude/Behavioral Change in External Publics: positive/negative attitude toward organization, decision to support/oppose organization, purchase/non-purchase of products
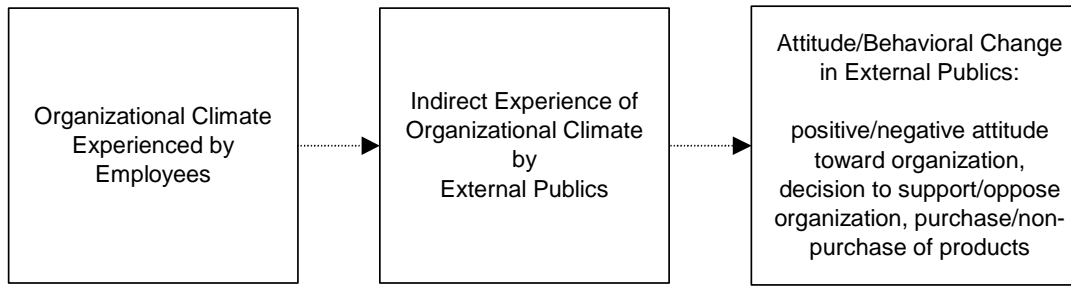
Figure 2. Organizational Climate Concept

causal relationship between the organizational climate experienced by employees and organizational outcomes, these researchers incorporated another intermediating variable of customer experience with organizational climate. In other words, organizational climate experienced by an employee is transferred to publics through their interaction, and the quality of this interaction affects publics' attitude or behavior toward the organization (Figure 2). According to B. Schneider and D. Bowen (1993), service climate can be improved by emphasizing commitment to service and providing concrete guidelines to everyone in the organization.

Instead of emphasizing broader patterns of mores, values, and beliefs, climate researchers argue that there needs to be a set of foundation issues established to encourage certain climates. Foundation issues include organizational activities such as training, coaching, evaluation programs, and facilities (B. Schneider, White, & Paul, 1997, 1998). Kiger (2002) observed that these foundations are necessary to provide employees the tools and support they need to develop positive relationships with clients.

Under the climate research framework, communication management can be understood as one of the foundation issues necessary to encourage a climate that

emphasizes positive, long-term relationship building with internal and external publics. The climate research is helpful in understanding how a particular organizational climate can affect organizational outcomes. Climate research emphasizes the significant roles employees play in building positive relationships with external publics. In this study, I adopted the climate concept that focuses on identifying specific organizational practices and foundation issues in exploring relevant contexts for relationship management. The literature review up to this point, leads me to the following research questions.

RQ 1. How do participants characterize the organization's public relations practice?

RQ 2. How do employees characterize the internal communication system of the organization?

RQ 3. How do participants characterize the organization's climate for internal and external relationship building?

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).

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 (Kallaith, 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, positiverelationships 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

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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. By asking participants what it means to have relationships with an organization, it may be possible to find useful information for refinement of relationship theories.

There still seems to be much debate on how OPR should be defined and conceptualized. The literature review suggests that there still is a need for a more general definition of OPR. The definitions suggested by public relations scholars thus far are either too broad or too narrow in scope or sometimes neglect the important component of communication in the relationship-building process. In my opinion, an OPR develops only after repeated communication takes place between the organization and publics. In this study, I posit the following as a definition of an organization-public relationship:

An organization-public relationship (OPR) is a connection or association between an organization and a public that results from behavioral consequences an organization or a public has on the other and that necessitates repeated communication.

In this study, I attempted to explore an inclusive notion of an OPR by exploring the subjective perceptions of the participants in relationships. Thus, I posited the following research questions:

RQ 4.   When do participants of this study perceive they have developed an OPR?

RQ 5a. How do participants characterize the quality of their OPR?

RQ 5b. How do participants characterize a mutually beneficial OPR?

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

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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 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.

Overall, J. Grunig and Huang's (2000) three-stage model, which includes situational antecedents, cultivation strategies, and relationship outcomes provides an effective framework for understanding the various aspects of OPR. According to their model, relationship antecedents are situational depending on issues at hand, which would require different cultivation strategies and result in different relationship outcomes. The literature review up to this point leads me to the next research question.

RQ 6. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or find effective in developing positive OPR?

Employees in Relationship Management

Employees have been regarded as one of the most important strategic constituencies in public relations. However, few public relations scholars have applied

relationship theories to studying employee publics. Wilson (1994, 2001), Ledingham and Bruning (2001), and Hon and J. Grunig (1999) are among the very few public relations scholars who have pointed out the need of inclusion of employees within the relationship-building research agenda.

I argue that research on individual employees may elicit fruitful information for development of relationship theories. In fact, many disciplines of organizational studies are exploring roles of frontline employees in order to understand relationship management. In this research, I make the assumption that individual employees who interact with publics have valuable knowledge and experiences that can help better understand the relationship building process. Next, I will further discuss studies that have focused on individual employees in relationship building processes.

Synergy Among Internal and External Relationships

Recently, there has been increased interest in employees in organizational studies. This is in part because of recent developments in fields such as business management, marketing, and organizational psychology. Business management scholars and marketing scholars are finding empirical research evidence that suggests that the quality of relationships organizations have with their employees can affect customers' satisfaction with the organization greatly and, furthermore, organizational performance such as profits (Czaplewski, 2001; B. Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). Often referred to as "employee-customer-profit chain" research (Rucci, Kim, & Quinn, 1998) or "linkage research" (B. Schneider, D. Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holocombe, 2000), the topic has generated great interest. Some scholars and practitioners view it as an alternative concept to total quality management (Guaspari, 2002). Central to this

stream of research are employees, who are seen as the critical boundary personnel between an organization and its external publics.

In the following, I review relevant theories in business management, organizational psychology, marketing, and organizational communication. I start with the business management and organizational psychology literature, which discusses the connection between employee loyalty and customer loyalty. Secondly, I move to marketing literature that specifically views the concept of relationships as central to studying the employee-customer link. Thirdly, I discuss communication competence theories in organizational communication as they relate to other linkage research.

Employee Commitment/Loyalty

For this research, I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the entire organizational psychology or business management literature. Rather, I focus on reviewing research relevant to this study, the literature on employee commitment or loyalty.

Organizational Commitment

Several research traditions in business management, organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management share a common research interest. They are concerned with understanding "the different types of bonds that develop between employees and organizations" (Mowday, 1998, p. 392).

Organizational commitment (OC) has been one of the significant areas of research in organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resources management. OC is generally defined as a "psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily

leave the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 252). According to Mowday (1998), the concept was born out of a research project led by organizational psychologist Porter in the 1970s. Porter and his colleagues (Mowday, Porter, & Dubin, 1974; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) believed that OC was a concept that has significant relevance for individual employees and organizations. They theorized that for employees, OC would represent a positive relationship with the organization that may "add meaning to life" (Mowday, 1998, p. 388). For organizations, committed employees will perform better and have lower turnover rates and absenteeism.

Initially, Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) suggested that OC is a unidimensional construct emphasizing affective attachment. Strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership were the three components of Porter et al.'s OC construct. They also have developed a 15-item measure, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), which has become a primary source for OC research. However, as the research progressed, other scholars started to explore different types of attachment that can account for employee behavior and retention. Scholars such as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) proposed alternate constructs of compliance, identification, and internalization.

However, what Meyer and Allen (1991) suggested received great attention and produced active research on OC. According to Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997), there are three forms of OC: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the emotional link employees have with the organization, which is similar to what Porter et al. (1974) had initially proposed. Continuance commitment is related to

employees' recognition of cost of leaving or rewards of staying. Allen and Meyer (1997) explained that when an employee has strong continuance commitment, he or she stays with the organization because they have to. Lastly, when an employee has normative commitment, he or she stays with the organization out of sense of obligation to the organization.

Many scholars studied the relationship between these three dimensions of OC and other work or non-work related variables (for a review, see Benkhoff, 1997; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In addition, scholars explored not only employees' commitment toward an organization but also toward supervisors, their occupation, top management, co-workers, work-unit, and customers (Becker, 1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Gregersen, 1993; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

Among the three dimensions of commitment, positive relationships between affective commitment and performance have been demonstrated in the majority of OC studies (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002). Chen and Francesco (2003) explained that affective commitment was studied more extensively than any other dimension of commitment, partly because affective commitment is considered to develop more specifically in relation to work experiences within a particular organization (p. 493). Chen and Francesco added that when employees feel they are treated well by an organization or participate in decision making, employees develop affective commitment and perform better than when they do not develop affective commitment.

Recently, OC research has been criticized for its conceptual irrelevance in organizational management. In particular, Baruch (1998) argued that with the downsizing trend, employers are not as loyal as they were to employees, thus it is not

reasonable to ask employees to be committed to the organization. In this sense, studying the concept of employee commitment is irrelevant. Baruch predicted that the OC research would continue to wane. However, many scholars believe OC to be a valid and meaningful concept to study further. Mowday (1998) provided a counter argument by discussing emergence of loyalty as a popular concept in business management.

Loyalty

In the organizational psychology literature, loyalty is considered as synonymous with commitment (Morrow & McElroy, 1993; Werther, 1988). Management scholar Powers (2000) explained that employee loyalty is synonymous with commitment and has attitudinal and behavioral components. Powers explained that it is the behavioral component that is important for organizations. Voyles (1999) on the other hand saw loyalty to be a concept that subsumes commitment. He explained the following as predictors of loyalty: employees' commitment to business goals and objectives, intention to stay with the organization, and use of expertise to create value for customers (p. 69).

The term "loyalty" was popularized in part by two business management books. In 1996, management consultants Reichheld and Teal published *The Loyalty Effect*, in which they strongly argued that loyalty to and from employees, customers, and investors is critical in value creation and developing competitive advantage in business. They criticized organizations that gave up on being loyal to their employees as a result of downsizing and economic downturns. They argued that, in the long run, organizations that pursue strategies to increase employee commitment gain

competitive advantage over others. In a recent interview, Reichheld said that "the only way a company can grow a loyal customer base is by building committed relationships with the employees responsible for serving those customers" (as cited in Finnie & Randall, 2002, p. 25). Kiger (2002) said that good relationships with customers come from "keeping the employees happy" (p. 28). Duboff and Heaton (1999) also argued that in order for an organization to effectively build long-term relationships with customers, it must first develop effective, long-term relationships with employees who are willing to serve those customers. In his book, *Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First,* Pfeffer (1998) made a similar argument to *The Loyalty Effect.* To Pfeffer, a people-centered strategy is a source of competitive advantage, because it is difficult to imitate.

Reichheld and Teal (1996) and Pfeffer (1998) argued in their books that there are links among management practices that enhance employee commitment and organizational outcomes such as economic returns. However, they did not go into in-depth discussions of scholarly theories or evidence. According to Mowday (1998), recent developments in OC research provide some support for Pfeffer and Reichheld's argument. The emerging idea is that human resource management practices that focus on commitment lead to high levels of employee affective commitment and eventually to positive organizational performances (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997).

According to Mowday (1998), there is increasing evidence that for organizations opting for high performance, commitment-based human resources strategies can improve economic outcomes. Mowday explained that employee

commitment can be seen as a critical management construct that can lead to financial

success and competitive advantage. Encouraging evidence also comes from Rucci,

Kim, & Quinn's (1998) study of Sears. In an effort to turn around the sagging Sears,

Rucci et al. and the Sears management developed a model that suggested how creating

a compelling place to work leads to creation of a compelling place to shop, which in

turn would make Sears a compelling place in which to invest. Relevant performance

indicators were developed for the three objectives, which included financial

performance indicators for the compelling place to invest. Rucci et al. examined the

causal path among these three components and found that a 5-unit increase in

employee attitude measures—attitude toward job and the company—resulted in a 1.3-

unit increase in customer satisfaction and, eventually, a 0.5% increase in revenue

growth (p. 91). Mowday (1998) said that although this study did not use measures of

OC, it provides great insights for understanding the relationship between employees'

OC and financial performance of the organization.

Several OC scholars have noted the importance of internal communication

management in creating loyal employees and customers. However, communication

has seldom been recognized as a primary variable; and research devoted to developing

systematic communication theory is scarce. In my opinion, public relations can also be

considered as a critical organizational practice that affects employee commitment

through strategic management of communication. Open, honest, and two-way

communication is often described as ideal communication models by management

scholars (Freeland, 1995; Kanter, 1993), which is quite similar to what J. Grunig and

his colleagues (1992) have described as the symmetrical model of communication.

Furthermore, I believe that public relations is at a perfect position to carry out integrated communication programs for both internal and external publics. Many OC scholars believe that the human resources management function should be responsible for creating synergy between internal and external publics through implementing relevant communication programs. However, in my opinion, human resources practice has long focused on internal publics; and human resource managers or executives are not fully trained as communication specialists. As J. Grunig (1992b) suggested, it may be more efficient to collaborate with the public relations function to communicate human resources strategies or messages.

On a theoretical level, I also find conceptual relevance of employee commitment to the relationship theories in public relations. As Chen and Francesco (2003) observed, OC constructs are a psychological state that "characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (p. 2). OC scholars consider OC to be a complete concept that captures employees' relationships with organizations. In public relations, commitment is conceptualized as a component of relationship constructs, which also includes trust, control-mutuality, and satisfaction. In my opinion, incorporation of the OC concept enables us to better capture relationships specific to internal publics, who have quite a different bond with the organization than external publics.

Bruning and Ledingham (1998) were among the first to apply customer loyalty theories to the relationship theories in public relations. Based on customer survey research for a telephone service company, Bruning and Ledingham reported that

ratings of OPR dimensions such as trust, commitment, openness, and involvement predicted customer loyalty toward the organization. They conceptualized loyalty as customers' intention to leave or stay with the company. They concluded that effective relationship management can generate customer loyalty toward an organization. Bruning and Ledingham's research showed how relationship concepts can be used in the management of customer loyalty. However, they have focused only on external communication, and in public relations, few scholars have applied OC or loyalty theory in exploration of employee relationships.

In this study, I am studying employees of a particular organization. Thus, I focus on exploration of the affective commitment dimension that develops out of specific work related experience with a particular organization. In OC literature, affective commitment has been studied the most and empirical data supports existence of a positive relationship between affective commitment and employee performance (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). This is another reason why I focused on affective commitment.

Internal Marketing/Branding

Relationships also have become a crucial concept within marketing research. According to B. Schneider, D. Bowen, Ehrhart, and Holocombe (2000), the concept of relationship marketing was first introduced by Berry (1983) but it was only after the early 1990s that it became a focal research topic. B. Schneider et al. explained that relationship marketing departed from traditional marketing goals of bringing new customers and started to focus on retaining existing customers.

Brierley (1994) explained that the most important reason for building

relationships in marketing is to "identify and target those customers with the greatest

potential for incremental sales and profit" (p. 27). Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined

relationship marketing as "all marketing activities directed toward establishing,

developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (p. 22). Much research

in marketing is based on the transactional or exchange nature of relationships. In this

sense, relationship marketing scholars are interested in a specific segment of publics—

consumers—in comparison with public relation scholars. Public relations scholars are

not only interested in exploration of consumers but also of other strategic

constituencies of organizations such as employees, community, government, media,

and activists. However, marketing scholars such as Morgan and Hunt (1994) did argue

that relationship marketing should be directed to broader relational exchanges that

include government, non-profit organizations, employees, suppliers, and competitors.

One of the branches of relationship marketing research is internal marketing,

which specifically focuses on employees of an organization. Similar to business

management scholars, internal marketing scholars also argue that employee relations

has its greatest implications on organizational performances through its effect on

consumer relations.

Internal Marketing

According to Rafiq and Ahmed (2000), internal marketing was first introduced

as "a solution to the problem of delivering consistently high service quality" (p. 449).

Although the concept of internal marketing has a 20-year history, there is no

consensus on what is meant by it. Based on a review of the internal marketing

literature, Rafiq and Ahmed identified three major phases in the development of the concept: employee motivation and satisfaction, customer orientation, and strategy implementation.

Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) explained that in the early days of internal marketing, scholars focused on the issue of employee satisfaction and motivation in service marketing. The logic behind this focus was that you need satisfied and motivated employees in order to provide consistent quality service to customers. Berry's (1981) definition of internal marketing clearly reflects this logic. Berry explained that employees are the internal customers; jobs are "internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of internal customers while addressing objectives of the organization" (p. 34). Scholars in this phase proposed use of marketing techniques on employees (Cardy, 2001; Davis, 2001). Because the main product in service marketing is "labor or human acts of performance" (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000, p. 451) it is critical to recruit and retain the best-motivated staff. This led scholars such as Sasser and Arbeit (1976) to argue for the application of internal marketing for personnel.

However, treating employees as customers has several problems. As Guaspari (2002) pointed out, employees are quite different from customers. Relationships between an organization and its employees are not primarily based on transaction or exchange of products or services. Employees have different expectations toward the organization. Simply to replicate what specifically is designed for consumers may not work for employees.

Scholars such as Grönroos (1981) and George (1990) argued that the objective of internal marketing is to "acquire customer-conscious employees" (Grönroos, 1981,

p. 237). In particular, Grönroos called for effective co-ordination and integration of functions vital to customer relations. In this approach, employees are not treated as customers; and the focus is on "creating customer orientation in employees through a process of influencing, rather than satisfying and motivating employees *per se*" (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000, p. 452).

The third approach sees internal marketing as a mechanism to implement the overall management strategy. For instance, Davis (2001) argued that instead of treating internal marketing as a one-time program or campaign, it should be considered more as an on-going management strategy (p. 121). In this approach, internal marketing is seen as a method for "managing employees towards the achievement of organizational goals" (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000, p. 452). Proponents of this approach suggest integration of multiple functions (e.g., human resources) under marketing (George, 1990; Glassman & McAfee, 1992; Winter, 1985). In this regard, Flipo (1986) pointed out the need to overcome conflicts and communication barriers among departments for effective strategy implementation.

The review of literature reveals that although communication is a critical factor in internal marketing, few scholars fully discuss its importance. Rather than treating employees as customers to whom an organization has to sell something, application of public relations' relationship theories may lend results that are more fruitful for employee relations.

Internal Branding

More recently, the notion of internal branding began to emerge as an alternative to internal marketing. Internal branding can be seen as a part of internal

marketing research, which emphasizes the concept of branding. According to

proponents of internal branding, a corporation must first align its employees with its

brand before it can make brand promises to its customers (Gary Stromberg, personal

communication, November 17, 2002).

Mitchell (2002) maintained that it is important for organizations to sell their

brands internally as it is the best way to help employees make "emotional connection"

to products and services of the organization. She explained that when employees have

belief in the brand, they will be motivated to work harder and their loyalty to the

company will increase. According to Guaspari (2002), "internal branding" is the new

buzzword in marketing and business management consulting. The purpose of this

approach is to attract and retain talented employees and furthermore, to garner positive

effects on organizational goals of building positive external relationships.

In a recent conference at the Public Relations Society of America, internal

communication consultant, Stromberg[4] (personal communication, November 17,

2002), presented internal branding as the answer to creating synergy between

workplace and marketplace. Stromberg argued that brands influence three

constituencies. For investors, a brand forms a relationship that secures future earnings

by retaining customer loyalty. For customers, a brand is a name that stands for

something positive in customers' mind. Finally, brand promises live through the

individual efforts of employees; and a brand must be embraced by the employees.

According to Stromberg, brands make it possible for organizations to form

relationships with customers.

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[4]   Gary Stromberg is the CEO and founder of Stromberg Consulting, which is a part of Ketchum
Public Relations (www.scny.com).

Internal branding seems to make good sense at first glance; however, the notion of internal branding needs closer examination. In general, marketing scholars and practitioners lack a fundamental discussion of what they mean by brand or branding, on which they build their arguments. According to Grassl (1999), there are two schools of thoughts on definition of a brand. One is the idealistic view that simply conceptualizes brands as "names, terms, signs, symbols, and designs" (Kotler, 1997, p. 443). In this view, brands are not a specific product but "a seller's promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits, and services to the buyers" (Grassl, 1999, p. 2).

On the other hand, there is the realist view. In this view, brands are determined by "properties of product space" and "cannot be simply reduced to their external characteristics such as names, symbols, or designs" (Grassl, 1999, p. 5). Grassl explained that brands depend on "perception of differences in the product itself and on any claims made on behalf of the product" (p. 7). In this sense, branding starts with the concrete quality of a product. Grassl explained that brand idealists often neglect this fact and focus only on managing perceptual aspects of brands.

Public relations scholar J. Grunig (personal communication, 2002) argued that human perceptions cannot be managed and it is only the behavior of organizations that can be managed. In this sense, the concept of relationship management in public relations, which focuses on managing behaviors, seem much more appropriate than branding for employee relations.

Throughout the review of management and marketing literature, the linkage research or employee-publics-organizational performance chain research seems to be gaining momentum. The task is to create synergy between the workplace and

marketplace through various management practices. For organizational commitment scholars, developing employee commitment through human resources practices is the answer. For marketing scholars, application of external marketing strategies to employees and integrating human resource and other supporting functions under marketing is suggested. However, solutions suggested inevitably entail communication and building positive relationships internally and externally with strategic publics. I believe that as a relationship management practice that uses strategic cultivation strategies, public relations can help develop positive behavioral relationships with internal and external publics. Based on the literature review to this point, I posit the following research questions:

RQ 7. What types of organizational commitment do the employee participants have?

RQ 8. How does the quality of EOR affect the EPR building process?

Communication Competence

Another interesting theme that emerged from review of the linkage research is the emphasis on the personal characteristics of individual employees. Scholars argue that the personal characteristics of employees affect their interaction with customers and their retention in the future. For instance, Kiger (2002) reported that hiring employees with the right customer satisfaction potential is crucial for successful relationship management with customers. He explained that the right kind of person will have higher level of "psychological hardiness," which includes qualities such as optimism, flexibility, and the ability to handle stressful situations without being emotionally threatened (p. 28). The focus on individual employees as critical

communicators in the relationship-building process led me to the field of organizational communication. Concepts found in organizational communication research can be useful in understanding individual employees as communicators.

Organizational communication scholars have studied employee communication management. Some of the prevalent research topics include communication climate or culture, communication networks, empowerment or employee involvement in decision making, and communication competence (Jablin & Putnam, 2001). Among these topics, communication competence is of particular interest in this study. This is because this study attempts to find out characteristics of effective relationship builders within the organization.

According to Jablin and Sias (2001), there are two major dimensions in the conceptualization of communication competence in organizational communication. One is a behavioral conception in which communication competence is defined as "the ability to demonstrate appropriate communication in a given context" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 66). The other is a cognitive conception, in which competence is defined as the "knowledge of appropriate communication rules and norms" and "communication capacities" (Jablin & Sias, 2001, p. 820).

The behavioral and cognitive dimensions are closely interrelated, and much of the competence research reflects this. Jablin and Sias (2001) reported three different levels of analysis in competence research: individual, group, and organizational levels. Particularly at the individual level, many scholars attempted to develop inventories of communication behaviors indicative of a competent organizational communicator.

Listening, giving feedback, advising, persuading, giving instructions, interviewing, and motivating are some of the competent communication behaviors identified (Jablin, Cude, House, Lee, & Roth, 1994). Scholars such as Wheeless and Berryman-Fink (1985) suggested altercentrism and interaction management as the basic dimensions of competence. Scudder and Guinan (1989) identified encoding abilities such as getting to the point, writing ability, and clarity of expression. They also suggested decoding abilities such as listening, attentiveness, and sensitivity.

As for the cognitive dimension, researchers suggested cognitive differentiation, perspective taking, and self-monitoring (Sypher & Sypher, 1983). Jablin and Sias (2001) explained, "the more developed a person's social cognitive abilities, the more the individual is successful in an organization" (p. 823). Duran and Spitzberg (1995) suggested including the ability to consider contextual variables that may affect the success of the communication process within the cognitive dimension. They explained such ability as follows: "monitoring manners in which the conversations transpire and reflecting upon one's performance to eliminate unsuccessful communication tacts" (p. 270).

In short, a competent individual communicator possesses a set of particular behavioral characteristics and cognitive abilities, is "knowledgeable about communication rules and norms," and has the ability to "anticipate and reflect on the interaction of situational factors and their own communicative behavior" (Jablin & Sias, 2001, p. 824). Much of what organizational scholars suggested as competent communication behavior overlaps with components of symmetrical cultivation strategies in public relations. In this study, I conceptualize employee communication

competence as the knowledge and abilities to use symmetrical cultivation strategies. The literature review on to this point leads me to the following research questions.

RQ 9. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or find effective in developing a positive EPR?

RQ 10. How does the quality of EPR affect the public's evaluation of the organization?

Summary

Overall, the literature review suggests there are positive linkages among perceived quality of employee-organization relationships and employee-public relationships. This positive linkage is also connected to positive organizational outcomes. Many organizational scholars are striving to theoretically understand connections among employees, external constituencies, and organizational outcomes. There are significant efforts in developing organizational theories that can provide a framework for creating synergy between internal and external constituencies to achieve positive organizational goals. There seems to be an overlap in studies that point out how communication management is the most critical factor. Discussions of the integrative management of internal and external communication abounds, but there is little consensus on how it should be done and which organizational function should claim the responsibility.

I believe that public relations is at the perfect position within an organization to carry out integrative communication management programs. In internal marketing theories, employees are often treated as another group of customers, which neglect the different nature of relationships that employees may have with an organization. In

business management, the human resources department is often suggested as a function that should be responsible for an integrative communication program. However, a human resources department may not be an ideal function to carry out the relationship building function both for employees and external publics. For employees, the fact that human resources departments can control their livelihood within the organization may not be conducive to an open communication process. In addition, human resources department have less experience with external publics than public relations departments. In contrast, public relations has traditionally included internal and external publics as important organizational constituencies.

As J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained, public relations functions as a boundary spanner between an organization and its internal and external publics. In addition to this classic definition of the public relations function, recent theoretical developments in relationship management in public relations also provide a conceptual framework to theoretically understand and implement the integrative management of internal and external communication.

Despite the potential in public relations, not much attention has been given in the field to employees' reports of the quality of their relationships with the organization and even less to the exploration of their roles in the relationship building process with the external publics. I hoped to fill this void in public relations research by conducting this study.

More specifically, I pose the following propositions and research questions based on my review of literature. As a result of searching for answers to the research

questions and exploring the propositions, I attempt to develop a normative theory of integrative internal and external relationship management.

Propositions

1. When employees develop positive EOR and EPR, publics who interact with them are likely to develop positive OPR.

2. A symmetrical, internal communication system contributes to the development of positive EOR.

3. Employees' positive EOR motivates them to proactively develop positive EPR.

4. Positive EPR occurs, when employees use symmetrical cultivation strategies to build individual relationships with thepublics .

5. The dominant coalition's support for public relations is critical to the effective management of EOR, EPR, and OPR.

Research Questions

RQ 1. How do participants characterize the organization's public relations practice?

RQ 2. How do employees characterize the internal communication system of the organization?

RQ 3. How do participants characterize the organization's climate for internal and external relationship building?

RQ 4. When do participants of this study perceive they have developed an OPR?

RQ 5a. How do participants characterize the quality of their OPR?

RQ 5b. How do participants characterize a mutually beneficial OPR?

RQ 6.   What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as

important, or find effective in developing a positive OPR?

RQ 7.   What types of organizational commitment do the employee participants

have?

RQ 8.   How does the quality of EOR affect the EPR building process?

RQ 9.   What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as

important, or find effective in developing a positive EPR?

RQ 10.   How does the quality of EPR affect the public's evaluation of the

organization?

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to contribute a normative theory of integrative internal and external organizational relationship management to the public relations body of knowledge. I was attempting to gain in-depth understanding of relationship-building processes within a particular context of an organization's public relations practices. I wanted to understand how relationships are initiated, built, and maintained in a real life setting. I intended to explore the complex interrelations between variables such as internal organizational relationships and external organizational relationships. For my study, qualitative methods were appropriate.

The Case Study Strategy

Research questions posited in this study focused on investigating how theories operate within a specific organizational context. Thus, I chose to use case study strategy.

What Is a Case Study?

Mitchell (1983) defined a case study as a "detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles" (p. 192). Yin (1994) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident…[and] relies on multiple sources of evidence" (p. 13). As Yin said, one should use a case study strategy because he or she deliberately wants to study contextual conditions. According to Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000), case study refers to research that investigates a few cases in considerable depth.

Most scholars agree that a case study is not a particular method but a strategy (Stoecker, 1991, Yin, 1994). Stake (2000) also argued that a case study is not so much a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. Yin (1994) argued that a case study should not be confused with qualitative research. Gomm et al. (2000) argued that a case study implies collection of unstructured data and qualitative analysis of data. However, most case study researchers (Yin, 1994; Stake, 2000; Stoecker, 1991) explained that a case study can employ the best of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Yin (1994) explained that a case study is a comprehensive research strategy that deals with situations "in which there will be more variables of interest than data points," "relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to be converged in a triangulating fashion," and that "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 13). Stoecker (1991) explained that case studies allow researchers to explore different outcomes of general processes suggested by theories depending on different contexts.

Ragin (1992) explained that in the social sciences, researchers seldom define what they mean by a case in case studies and that there is no agreement about what a "case" is. Ragin explained that in conventional "variable-oriented" comparative work, investigators begin by defining the problem in a way that allows examination of many cases. Data on specific variables are collected and the focus of the research process is on explaining relations among these variables. However, in "case-oriented" work, individual cases are the focus of research, not variables. On the other hand, Stake (1995) defined a case as "a bounded system" that has working parts. In this research, I take Stake's approach in defining the case. The participating organization is the

bounded system of interest and the working parts that are of particular interest are the employees and members of community who engage in public relations processes.

Types of Case Studies

Stake (1995) distinguished different types of case studies as follows. An intrinsic case study is carried out when one wants to understand a particular case. When one has a research question and wants to get insight into the question by studying a particular case, instrumental case study is conducted. A collective case study refers to extension of an instrumental study to several cases (pp. 3-4). Yin (1994) suggested three different types of case studies. Depending on the type of research question, there are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. He explained that if the research is mainly focused on "what" questions, it may call for exploratory study. An explanatory case study deals with "how" or "why" questions. A descriptive study focuses on covering the background information and accurate description of the case in question.

Because this study seeks to answer questions that arise from a conceptual review of theories and tries to understand the theoretical framework within a specific setting, it can be considered as an instrumental case study. As for Yin's typologies, this study can be considered as an explanatory case study because it attempts to answer how the relational theories play out in the real life context.

Question of Generalizability in Case Studies

Case studies have been criticized for lacking the grounds for generalization (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) argued that case studies are only "generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 10). Yin explained

that the purpose of case studies is in "analytical generalization" to expand theory and not in statistical generalization. Stake (1995) also argued that with case studies researchers make "naturalistic generalizations," which are different from deductive generalizations based on statistical analysis. He added that naturalistic generalizations develop by recognizing similarities of objects and issues within a context and "by sensing the natural covariations of happenings" (Stake, 2000, p. 22).

Donmoyer (2000) also argued that thinking of generalizability "solely in terms of sampling and statistical significance is no longer defensible or functional" (p. 46). He explained that human beings act toward things that are meaningful to them and because meanings are generated by social interaction rather than external causes, "to expect Newton-like generalizations describing human action is to engage in a process akin to 'waiting for Godot' (Cronbach, 1982)" (p. 48).

However, for Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000), the issue of generalization should not be dismissed as irrelevant. Gomm et al. maintained that boundary of cases should be clarified in order to make appropriate generalizations. They explained that the selection of cases should be carefully carried out depending on whether the researcher hopes to claim "significant likely dimensions of heterogeneity of a population" or to provide evidence "in support of claims that the case(s) studied are typical (or atypical) in relevant aspects" (p. 111). In this research, I will not attempt to make statistical generalizations to a larger population. Rather, as Yin (1994) explained, I will try to make analytical generalization to expand theory. However, as Gomm et al. (2000) pointed out, I believe results of this research can provide grounds for generalizations about the case under study and to other similar cases. In this study,

I am conducting a single case study. In the following, I will discuss how a single case study can be justified.

A Word on a Single Case Study

According to Hamel (1992), an individual case is the "*mandatory* intermediary in attempting to grasp the common nature of individual actions and behaviors" (p. 104). Hamel explained that a singular feature of some phenomenon can be considered as part of a whole. He further stated that singularity can be defined as "accentuating generality" (p. 108). For Stoecker (1991), single case studies allow us to "see variables operating that are lost in cross-sectional quantitative research (Scranton, 1986)" (p. 94).

In this study, I do not believe the chosen single case will be one that accentuates generality. What I am attempting in this study is "a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which [I] believe exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles" (Mitchell, 1983, p. 192). According to Mitchell (1983), the validity of the case study depends "not on the typicality or representativeness of the case but upon the cogency of the theoretical reasoning" (p. 207).

Although the quote is lengthy, Homans (1950, as cited in Gouldner, 1954) aptly described how a single case study could be viewed in a social scientific research context:

> Sociology may miss a great deal if it tries to be too quantitative too soon. Data are not nobler because they are quantitative…Lord Nelson, greatest of all admirals, after explaining to his ship captains the plan of attack he intended to use at the battle of Trafalgar, went on to say 'No Captain can do very wrong

who places his ship alongside that of an enemy.' In the same way, no one who

studies a group will go far wrong if he gets close to it, and by whatever

methods are available, observes all that he can…The statistician might find

fault with the passages for not letting him know the relation between the

'sample' and the 'universe,' that is, the number of groups directly observed

and the larger number for whose behavior the average is supposed to hold

good…His criticisms are good, and they can be answered only by raising new

questions: How much more effort, in men, time, and money, would be needed

to get the kind of data he wants?...These are questions not of scientific morality

but of strategy… (p. 33)

The case of this study was chosen based on the fact that it was an exemplary

case of how to use employee communication and involvement in its community

relations practice. In addition, as this research attempted to investigate relationship

management between an organization and its non-consumer publics, the organization

was an appropriate case for exploration of the research questions posed.

Strengths of Case Study Strategy

According to Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000), in-depth research of

specific instances in case studies can actually show causal processes in context, which

allows researchers to see which theoretical perspectives provide the best explanations.

Stoecker (1991) added that a case study has the ability "to explain idiosyncrasies,

which make up the 'unexplained variance'" (p. 94).

A case study is intensive research in which interpretations are given "based on

observable concrete interconnections between actual properties and people within an

actual concrete setting" (Stoecker, 1991, p. 95). Stoecker said a "case study is the best way by which we can refine general theory and apply effective interventions in complex situations" (p. 109). In other words, case studies allow researchers to explore different outcomes of general processes suggested by theories depending on different contexts, which suits public relations research that seeks application of theories to practice.

Walton (1992) explained, "cases are wrapped in theories" (p. 122). According to Walton, cases are "embodiments of causal processes operating in microcosm," and case studies are used "to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces take shape and produce results in specific settings" (p. 122). Walton said that understanding a specific case by applying available knowledge is an important intellectual task for social scientists. He maintained that understanding a particular empirical instance in its own right and contrasting it with other cases, are "practical steps toward constructing theoretical interpretations" (p. 128). For this reason, Walton claimed, case studies are likely to produce the best theory. Another unique strength of a case study is its ability to deal with a variety of evidence collected from documents, interviews, and observations.

Triangulation of Data

I chose case study design for this study in part because it allows a researcher to benefit from multiple methods, which may elicit more valid and comprehensive data than when a single method is used. L. Grunig (2000) explained that most relationship research has been done using survey methods. As she had suggested, contextual factors that were not captured through survey research should be explored. I hoped to

achieve that by using multiple qualitative methods such as interviewing, document analysis, and participant observation. However, interviewing was my primary source of data.

Many scholars support methodological triangulation. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that by using triangulation, a researcher can obtain a broader picture of the topic than can be generated through a single method. Mathison (1988) also argued that triangulation of methods increases the validity of research findings. She even stated that good research "obligates a researcher to triangulate" (p. 13). Methodological triangulation can occur either among quantitative methods and qualitative methods or among qualitative methods. However, Mathison said that to think triangulation will always result in data convergence is a "phantom image." She said that, in reality, researchers frequently find inconsistent and contradictory results. What researchers need to do is "attempt to make sense of what they find" and get a "holistic understanding" about the researched social phenomena (p. 17).

Yin (1994) said analyzing data gathered through multiple methods is the most difficult part in case studies. S. Bowen (2000) noted that one disadvantage of triangulation is the prolonged time spent designing different instruments and collecting and analyzing data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) also warned that a researcher can be overwhelmed by the amount of data collected through triangulation, which may lead a researcher to miss larger implications of a study. However, as S. Bowen (2000) explained, one can manage data collection and analysis resulting from triangulation by delimiting types and amount of data judiciously at the outset of a study and clarifying those delimitations.

I explored possible data sources before going into full-blown data collection. I had a preliminary discussion with the participating organization to negotiate or clarify the kinds of data sources I would have access to. In sum, I used the case study strategy, which involves triangulation of data collected from multiple qualitative methods—interviewing, document analysis, and participant observation. Detailed discussion of each method will follow.

Participants of Study

The Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL), its employees, and community members participated in this study. My advisor originally approached the organization, where he serves as a member of the organization's communication peer advisory panel. I then asked the director of the communication department for formal permission to study the organization, and she agreed.

BNL has been acknowledged for its excellent communication programs and has received awards for its excellent community relations practice. In the past, the organization had severe problems in the community because of the leakage of radioactive waste into the ground water and poor community relations. To deal with this problem, a new management contractor for the organization designed an exemplary community relations program, which included a great deal of employee involvement in the community. Recently, the organization also began to pay a great deal of attention to employee communication, which made it a perfect setting for the proposed research.

For this research, the organization's public relations practitioners, non-public relations employees, and community members who participate in community relations

programs were recruited. Community relations programs included open-house events held at the organization, citizen advisory panels, and employee volunteer programs.

Sampling

In qualitative methodology, sampling is approached quite differently than in quantitative methodology. Qualitative sampling usually is "*purposive*, rather than random (Kuzel, 1992; Morse, 1989)" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) to better capture the logic and coherence of social processes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that unlike the pre-specified samples in quantitative research, sampling in qualitative research can evolve. A researcher is not stuck with the initial sample of people, and he or she can go back to the same sample of people to further inquire. The researcher also can compare the initial sample with other contrasting samples identified during the course of research. This type of sampling is referred to as "conceptually driven sequential sampling" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2001), many qualitative researchers use theoretical or purposive sampling. In quantitative research, statistical sampling methods are used to obtain representative samples, which allow the researcher to make generalizations to the population. However, in qualitative research, the focus is on the in-depth investigation and understanding of "*small* samples of people nested in their context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

Strauss and Corbin's (1998) notion of "theoretical sampling" is also similar to Miles and Huberman's (1994) sampling technique. According to Strauss and Corbin, theoretical sampling enables a researcher to "choose those avenues of sampling that

can bring about the greatest theoretical returns" (p. 202). Theoretical sampling is guided by the evolving theory and becomes more specific as the research progresses. Strauss and Corbin explained that the general rule when building theory is to gather data until each category is saturated. Categorical saturation is evidenced by: "(a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212). In this study, I adopted theoretical construct sampling strategy as used in qualitative research. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explained that when a research project is driven by theoretical concepts, participants can be selected according to criteria of key constructs.

I recruited three major groups of participants for this study: public relations practitioners in the organization both at the managerial level and the staff level, non-public relations employees, and members of external publics. Participants were initially chosen through discussions with the contact person at the participating organization to ensure their theoretical relevance. For non-public relations employees the lab helped me obtain a list of the names and contact information of the relevant employees who were involved in community outreach efforts. From this list of people, I randomly chose employees and contacted them directly via e-mail (see Appendix A) to solicit voluntary participation. I recruited community members through referrals from employees I interviewed and by attending a community meeting and circulating a notepad for voluntary participation.

Table 1

Participants

	Frequency
Employees	36
Non-PR	25
Envoys	16
Summer Sundays	4
Speakers	2
VIP	3
PR practitioners	8
Top managers	3
Community members	27
CAC members	9
Envoy referred	8
Summer Sundays	10
Total	63

I also recruited key managers at the public relations directorate and gained access to a few top non public relations managers in hopes of gaining an understanding of how they understand and envision the characteristics of a normative communication model for developing positive relationships with employees and external publics. There is no set limit for ideal numbers of interviewees in qualitative research. In general, qualitative researchers suggest that when interviews elicit similar themes over and over again, one knows there is no need for further recruitment of informants.

As shown in Table 1, the total number of interview participants in this research was 63. I interviewed 25 non-public relations employees, 8 public relations and 3 top managers, and 27 community members. Ten of the community members were interviewed informally during my participant observation of Summer Sundays event. In terms of types of interviews, I conducted 3 elite interviews with top managers, 42 long-interviews with employees and community members, 8 telephone interviews with community members, and 10 informal interviews with community members. With the exception of the informal interviews with the 10 community

Table 2

Data Collection Summary for Interviews [a]

Participants	Non-PR Employees	PR Practitioners	Top Management	Community	Total
All Interviews	25	8	3	17	53
Long-interviews	25	8		9	42
Elite Interviews			3		3
Phone Interviews				8	8
Total-length of Interviews (Hours)	22.08	9.25	2.20	11.11	44.64
Mean-length of Interviews (Minutes)	53.00	69.37	43.92	39.21	50.54
Range-length of Interviews (Minutes)	29 - 71	40 - 103	39 - 49	12 - 69	12 - 103

[a] *Note.* Informal interviews with the 10 community members at the Summer Sundays are not included. Total length of informal interviews was 22.23 minutes.

members, the length of interviews ranged from 12 minutes to 103 minutes. Average

length of an interview was 50.54 minutes, and total interview time was 44.64 hours

(see Table 2).

Methods: Interviews, Document Analysis, and Participant Observation

Interviews

My primary source of evidence came from data collected from interviews. The use of interviewing as a means of data gathering is pervasive today. Fontana and Frey (2000) described interviewing as "one of the most common and powerful ways" (p. 645) to understand human beings. Generally, interviewing involves interpersonal, verbal interchange. However, there are various forms of interviewing depending on their structure and duration and number of participants.

In the ethnography literature, interviews are often differentiated according to the extent of their structured-ness. According to Bernard (1994), there are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. Unstructured interviewing is characterized by minimum control of the interviewer over the participant's responses. However, the researcher comes to the field with a generic plan he or she will keep in mind. When there are no time constraints in doing fieldwork and when dealing with sensitive issues, unstructured interviews are ideal.

Semi-structured interviewing is based on an interview guide, which contains list of questions and topics that need to be covered. Bernard (1994) explained that semi-structured interviews are best suited for interviewing elite members of communities, who are accustomed to efficient use of time. A fully structured interview refers to close-end survey questionnaires used in quantitative research. In this research, followingBernard's suggestions, semi -structured interviews were used. I developed an interview guide based on the literature review. In the following, I discuss several interview strategies that provided guidance in this study.

Long Interviews

According to McCracken (1988), a long interview is distinguished from more unstructured ethnographic interviews. It uses an open-ended interview protocol "so that investigators can maximize the time spent with respondents" (p. 7). In addition, it adopts a particular pattern of analysis—the four-step method of inquiry.

Step one is to review the analytic categories, which calls for exhaustive review of literature. Unlike unstructured ethnographic interviews, the researcher has a set of expectations based on the literature review. McCracken (1988) explained that the literature review lets the researcher exercise constant skepticism. Key concepts to be explored through the interview are identified and an interview protocol is developed based on the literature review (p. 32).

In the second step, the researcher starts to use him or herself as an instrument of inquiry, "in which he or she systematically appreciates his or her personal experience with the topic of interest" (McCracken, 1988, p. 32). McCracken called this stage a "review of cultural categories." The investigator keeps inventories and examines "associations, incidents, and assumptions that surround the topic in his or her mind (Merton et al., 1956, p. 4)" (McCracken, p. 32). McCracken explained that clear "understanding of one's vision of the world permits a critical distance from it" (p. 33). The interview questionnaire is constructed further at this stage. The third stage is actual implementation of the interview. The fourth stage, "discovery of analytic categories" (p. 33) refers to the analysis of collected data. I referred to McCracken's long interview framework in conducting my interviews and analyzing the collected data.

Elite Interviews

In my interviewing process, I adopted an elite interview strategy for top managers. The term "elite interview" does not necessarily refer to a particular method but refers to strategies needed to interview specific respondents who are considered to have more power, knowledge, money, and status than others in the population (Dexter, 1970).

According to Odendahl and Shaw (2002), elites often are inaccessible and seldom willing to "be the subject of scrutiny" (p. 299). They explained that thorough planning for access is necessary and identifying gatekeepers and making contact with them is crucial. Scheduling an interview is labor intensive, and the interviewer has to make the most out of allocated time. According to Hertz and Imber (1995), the elite interviewee often wants to teach the interviewer. The power dynamics will also affect the selection of interview location and type of interview format (Dexter, 1970; Thomas, 1995).

In this study, I interviewed three top managers of the organization. Unlike what was suggested by the literature on elite interviewing, I did not have difficulty in gaining access to them. This was in part because of the help and support of a public relations manager. For all three top managers, I was able to introduce myself to them during my attendance at a public meeting and a director's reception for visitors. With the help of the public relations manager, who accompanied me to these events, I was able to identify these top managers and approach them directly to ask for their participation in an interview, to which they agreed.

Pilot Interviews

An initial interview guide was developed and two pilot interviews with one public relations practitioner and one non-public relations employee were conducted in order to refine the initial design. I conducted pilot interviews with them and asked them to give me feedback on questions they were asked. From a pretest with a public relations manager, time management was one of the major problems identified because of the sheer number of questions. Given the limited time for interviews, I had to consolidate questions that were deemed redundant. Questions that were not effective in eliciting relevant responses were adjusted or dropped.

Words that were unclear or confusing were reworded. In particular, from the pilot interview with a non-public relations employee, I found that theoretical terms such as "stakeholders" were not familiar concepts. In interviewing non-public relations participants, I gave a brief explanation of the term prior to using the term in my questions. I also had to rearrange the sequence of questions to make the interview flow more natural.

Interview Guides

For this study I chose a semi-structured interview, which uses interview guides. Wolcott (1995) explained that interview questions should be based on theoretical hypotheses (p. 115). I also designed my questions around major theoretical concepts that I am investigating and organized my interview questions along side the research questions posited.

My interview guides were modified throughout the research process. This is because of the nature of qualitative research, which is flexible. Marshall and Rossman

(1995) explained that in qualitative studies, research designs evolve. Initial hypotheses or general questions are used as tools to generate more focused questions and find significant patterns (p. 37). Interviews started with a short introduction of the researcher and a request for participants to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B). The initial sets of questions asked about the participant's identity. These included questions about his or her position, responsibilities, and length of stay with the organization. In the following, I have organized interview questions under the research questions posited. However, in the actual guide, I organized questions in a different sequence from the conceptualization chapter, in order to create smoother transitions for participants. I have developed four separate guides for public relations practitioners, top management, non-public relations employees, and external publics— community members. Copies of interview guides are attached as appendices C, D, E, and F.

Public relations excellence. Relevant questions were adopted from the excellence study questionnaire (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). A set of questions on the practice of public relations was asked only of public relations practitioners and top managers. Questions related to internal communication were also asked of non-public relations employees. Organizational climate and internal communication questions were asked of public relations practitioners, top managers, and non-public relations employees.

RQ 1. How do participants characterize the organization's public relations practice?

      1. How are communication programs for communities developed and implemented? Could you explain the process for me?

The following probes were used if the main question did not elicit sufficient information:

    a.   What types of research do you conduct? How much research is involved before, during, and after a communication program?

    b.   How much do you listen to opinions of community publics and in what ways do you do so?

    c.   In your opinion, what is the main purpose of your organization's community relations activities?

    d.   In your opinion, how does your organization manage positive or negative information that would affect the community? To what extent do you disclose negative information about the organization?

    e.   In your opinion, how much does your organization value the community's interests as well as organizational interests?

    f.   What are the communication channels or media that your organization uses in its community relations practices?

RQ 2. How do employees characterize the internal communication system of the organization?

    1. How are communication programs for employees developed and implemented? Could you explain the process for me?

    2. How easy is it for employees to express concerns, and do you feel that your organization listens to your concerns? In what ways does the organization listen to you?

The following probes were used:

a. What types of research do you conduct? How much research is involved before, during, and after an employee communication program?

b. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of your organization's employee relations activities?

c. In your opinion, how does your organization manage positive or negative information that would affect employees?

d. In your opinion, how much does your organization value employees' interests as well as organizational interests?

e. What are the communication channels or media that your organization uses in its employee relations practices?

RQ 3. How do participants characterize the organization's climate for internal and external relationship building?

1. How important do you believe it is for the organization to build positive, long-term relationships with publics? How about with employees?

2. What are the examples of organizational practices, process, and rewards within the organization that encourage relationship building with publics?

Relationship management theories. Questions related to relationship management were asked of all participants.

RQ 4. When do participants of this study perceive they have developed an OPR?

1. Would you begin by telling me what are the first things that come into your mind when you hear the name of this organization? What else do you know about it?

2. Do you feel that you have a relationship with the (organization)(community group)? Why or why not?

3. In your opinion, what initiated the development of a relationship between (organization)(community group) and the (community group)(organization)?

RQ 5a. How do participants characterize the quality of their OPR?

RQ 5b. How do participants characterize a mutually beneficial OPR?

1. In your opinion, what characterizes a mutually beneficial relationship with the organization?

2. Please describe your relationship with the (organization) (community groups)?

The following probes were used:

a. Control Mutuality: To what extent do you feel the (organization) (community group) has any control over what (community group)(organization) do that affects the organization? Why?

b. Trust: Would you describe things that the (organization)(community group) has done that indicate it can be relied on to keep its promises, or that it does not keep its promises? How confident are you that the (organization)(community group) has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?

c. Commitment: Can you provide me any examples that suggest that the (organization)(community group) wants to maintain a long-term

commitment to a relationship with the (community

group)(organization) or does not want to maintain such a relationship?

d.   Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the relationship that the

(organization)(community group) has had with the (community

group)(organization)? Please explain why you are satisfied or not

satisfied.

e.   Communal Relationship: Do you feel that the

(organization)(community group) is concerned about the welfare of the

(community group)(organization) even if it gets nothing in return? Why

do you think so? What has it done?

f.   Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that the (organization)(community

group) gives or offers something to the (community

group)(organization) because it expects something in return? Can you

provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? Can

you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship

before?

RQ 6. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or

find effective in developing a positive OPR?

1.   Let's talk about things that (organization) has done to develop and continue

a long-term relationship with (community group). These strategies to

cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to

resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of

(community group). Please provide as many examples as you can.

2. To what extent do you think different communication strategies to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? What types of strategies do you think are most effective? Can you provide examples of strategies that (organization) or (community group) has used that damaged the relationship?

The following probe was used for public relations practitioners:

    a. In your organization, you deal with different types of publics. Are communication strategies tailored to address the different nature of community? In what way? Can you give me an example?

Synergy among internal and external relationships. The following sets of questions on organizational commitment and communication competence were asked of non-public relations employees. Questions on communication competence and affect of EOR on OPR were asked of non-public relations employees and community members.

RQ 7. What types of organizational commitment do the employee participants have?

1. What does it mean for you to work for this organization?

2. How much do you identify with your organization's goals and values?

3. Would you be willing to invest extra effort in your work for the organization? Why or why not?

4. How long would you like to maintain your membership with this organization?

5. What would be the consequence of leaving or staying with this organization?

6. Do you feel any sense of obligation to stay with the organization?

RQ 8. How does the quality of EOR affect the EPR building process?

1. Do you think the quality of relationship you have with the organization affects the way you interact and develop relationships with external publics? Why? Can you think of any example incident that illustrates this?

RQ 9. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or find effective in developing a positive EPR?

1. Can you tell me about your interaction with (community groups)(employees) of this organization? In what kind of settings do interactions take place? What do you normally talk about in those interactions?

2. Please think of a time when you had a particularly satisfying (dissatisfying) interaction with a(n) (member of community)(employee). When did the incident happen? What specific circumstances led up to this situation? Exactly what did the (member of community)(employee) say or do? What did you say or do?

3. What did you learn from these interactions and how do you think it affected community members' perceptions about the organization? What about your own perceptions about the organization?

RQ 10. How does the quality of EPR affect the public's evaluation of the organization?

1. Do you think the quality of interaction/relationship you have with an employee affects the way you see the organization? Why? Can you think of any example incident that illustrates this?

Document Analysis

Yin (1994) believed that documentary information should be "the object of explicit data collection" (p. 81) in case studies. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained that most recently, qualitative researchers have begun to use documents as their primary source. They explained that this trend is due in part to discourse theory developed in literature departments or in cultural studies. However, in this study, documents were not the primary source of evidence. As Yin explained, documentations were used to corroborate findings from other sources.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained that there are three main types of documentation: personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents. Personal documents are those produced by individuals for private use: They include letters, diaries, autobiographies, family photos, and other visual recordings. Official documents are produced by organizational employees for record-keeping and distribution, which include memos, newsletters, files, yearbooks, annual reports, minutes of meetings, code of ethics, and brochures. Popular documents are produced for commercial purposes: They include commercials, TV programs, photographs, news reports, and visual recordings.

Table 3

List of Documents Analyzed

Type of Documents	Number
Newsletters (May-July, 2003)	7
Brochures	2
Promotional catalogue	1
Magazines published by the organization	4
Newspaper articles searched in electronic databases	15
Meeting minutes	7
Employee handbooks/plans	2
Envoy Issues Notebook[a]	1
Policy statements	2
Organizational chart	2
Broadcast e-mails to employees (Archived file: 1997-2001)[b]	3
Internal research reports	6
Proceedings from the annual Communication & Trust Advisory Panel Meeting (Binded Books: 2001-2002)[c]	2

Note. [a] This notebook contained press releases, clippings of newspapers, copies of internal newsletters, presentation files, and reports on environmental cleanup dated from 1999 to 2002.

[b] Total size of three files: 7.9 MB

[c] This document contained evaluation plans, year-end report of community outrech activities, and presentation files.

In this study, I mainly collected official documents for analysis. Table 3 summarizes documents that were collected in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained that internal documents provide information about internal chain of command, internal rules, and regulations. They added that the official documents also provide "clues about leadership style" and "what organizational members value" (p. 136). External documents are produced for public use, and these are helpful in understanding "official perspectives" on programs or other aspects of an organization. Some researchers consider official documents to have positive bias and exclude them as data. However, as Bogdan and Biklen stated, official documents are a valuable source for qualitative researchers. Researchers can gain understanding of how an organization is defined by different people and gain access to the ways people inside the organization communicate (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 136). Similarly, Yin (1992) suggested that contradictions found between documents and main data provide an opportunity to probe further into the topic.

Stake (1995) also explained that documents can serve as a substitute for records of activities that the researcher was not able to directly observe. He further explained that studying documents follows the same logic as observing or interviewing. Based on a literature review and research questions, one needs to have a specific focus in collecting relevant documents but also needs to be open for unexpected findings. Stake suggested that a researcher should judiciously allocate time to analyze documents depending on their relevance and have a system to keep track of collected documents.

I followed Yin (1994) and Stake's (1995) suggestions in collecting and
analyzing document data. When relevant elements were found in the document review,
notes were made along with a copy of original material. Data collected through
documentation were organized by the coding schemes generated through the
interviews. More specifically, in addition to writing relevant category names on the
note-written documents, titles of the documents were written under the relevant
category or theme on the coding scheme sheet generated from interview transcripts for
concurrent review with the interview data.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was not a major data collection method because of
limited resources. However, when possible, I made unobtrusive observations during
the organizational activities such as internal meetings of the public relations
department, meetings of the community advisory panel, and community events. I also
followed the day-to-day activity of a public relations manager.

Participant observation is a data collection method often used in anthropology.
Wolcott (1995) explained that participant observation is a major dimension of
"fieldwork," which is a form of inquiry that requires a researcher to be immersed in
the ongoing social activities of study participants. Wolcott (1995) explained that
merely being within the research field does not qualify as conducting participant
observation. Wolcott said a researcher should have a general focus on what it is that he
or she is looking for and observe. He added that participant observation requires
gaining access, maintaining rapport, tolerance for ambiguity, and personal
determination.

Table 4

Data Collection Summary for Participant Observations

	Duration of observation (Hours)
Windshield tour of lab & surrounding community	3
Staff meeting	3
CAC meeting	3
BER meeting	1.5
Events	4.5
Director's reception	1.5
Summer Sundays	3
Total	19.5

Total length of days in field: 49 days

An observer can either passively accept what comes along or aggressively seek information by asking questions. Wolcott (1995) said the researcher should not intrude the interactions going on in the field and keep the research context as natural as possible. Spradley (1979) suggested strategies for making observations: Start with descriptive observation, narrow down to focused observation, and then move to selective observation (p. 73). In this study, I will follow what Spradley suggested in collecting observational data. A contact summary form suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used in the field to help collect and organize data (Appendix G). An observation recording form (Appendix H) suggested by Whitehead (2001) and

Spradley (1979) were used at meetings I attended. Table 4 summarizes observations conducted in this study.

<div align="center">*Contingency Plans*</div>

I was able to secure the cooperation of BNL. However, a qualitative researcher needs to be prepared for the unexpected. The organization could have backed out from the initial participation agreement because of a change of situation or because it later determines that the research would somehow be harmful for the organization.

Had the organization withdrawn I would have first started sending letters to other organizations that have similar communication programs. If this effort proved to be unsuccessful, I would have then started with organizations that I have worked for in the past. One is a for-profit Korean organization, in which I recently worked as a summer intern. I would have asked it for help, probably under the condition that I provide free consultation or work.

Fortunately, the organization continued with the research. However, I needed to carefully plan to lead a successful research process. First of all, in conducting interviews, I had to be flexible and sensitive about my participants' conveniences and duties as employees. I strived not to hamper the natural flow of work by keeping my promise about the length of interviews. When participants requested a halt because of an emergent situation I scheduled follow-up interviews.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

In qualitative research, there are some commonalities among different analysis techniques. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative data analysis involves

"working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145).

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined the data analysis process in three interlinked processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. They explained that depending on the theoretical framework, research questions, cases, and instruments, researchers should reduce data through summaries, coding, categorization, and clustering. Second, the reduced data should be organized in a structured way, e.g., synopses, vignettes, diagrams, and text matrices, which permit conclusion drawing or action taking. The third stage of conclusion drawing and verification refers to interpretations researchers make about the organized data (pp. 10-12).

Wolcott (1994) termed the data analysis process "transformation" and explained that there are three parts to it: description, analysis, and interpretation. Description refers to staying close to raw data and treating them as "facts" (p. 10). An example could be excerpts from fieldnotes and interview transcripts. Analysis refers to the process in which the researcher tries to expand beyond the raw data to systematically "identify key factors and relationships among them" (p. 10). Interpretation refers to the process in which the researcher tries to "make sense of what goes on, to reach out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what can be explained" (p. 11).

I will follow Wolcott's framework, which provides a general guideline for qualitative data transformation. I chose Wolcott's approach because his framework

captures the essence of qualitative data analysis and yet provides enough flexibility to adopt other researchers' relevant suggestions.

Specific to case studies, Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) suggested different data analysis techniques. Stake explained two different data analysis strategies, one that aggregates categorical data through multiple observations, and one that makes direct interpretation of individual instances (p. 74). However, Stake's analysis strategy is primarily appropriate for an intrinsic case study.

For the purpose of my study, in which I started with theoretical propositions and attempted to develop and expand a theory, Yin's (1994) suggestions were more appropriate. Yin explained two general methods of data analysis. One strategy is to rely on "the theoretical propositions that led to the case study" (p. 103). In this strategy, data are organized according to the theoretical propositions posited. Yin explained that theories help to focus attention on certain data. The second strategy is to "develop a descriptive framework for organizing the case study" (p. 104). For the purpose of my research, I will incorporate Yin's first strategy of reflecting back on theoretical propositions.

I used multiple methods in my research including interviewing, document analysis, and participant observation. My interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed. Scholars take different approach in transcribing interviews. Some believe full transcriptions provide richer data; however, some scholars maintain that partial transcriptions of relevant responses can elicit equally rich data as the fully transcribed ones. In my study, I did partial transcriptions of relevant responses rather than a verbatim transcript because of limited resources—time and money. As for the

interview transcript, I developed specific file names that identified the date, place, duration of interviews, and identification of interviewees. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) asserted that because the qualitative researcher is the main instrument, it is important to record his or her personal account of the research process to disclose any mistakes, prejudices, feelings, problems, ideas, and impressions. They pointed out that keeping an accurate record of methods, procedures, and evolving analysis is crucial in improving the research process. They suggested use of the term "observer's comment" (O. C.)[5] for this purpose. I recorded observer's comments in my transcripts and fieldnotes.

For instance, during my research at the lab, I was invited to such social gatherings as the director's reception and dinners at employees' homes. As many qualitative researchers point out, maintaining the delicate balance in the researcher-participant relationship was challenging. I carried a small notepad with me and kept a research journal, in which I recorded my thoughts and feelings, and reminded myself of the purpose of my research and the need to focus on the research questions.

In the analysis phase, as suggested by Wolcott (1994), I narrowed the data to identify essential features and relationships among them. This process involved what Miles and Huberman (1994) termed the reduction phase. I repeatedly read interview transcripts to look for emerging categories or themes, which then were used to code descriptive data. H. Rubin and I. Rubin's (1995) and Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding schemes were consulted to organize identified themes. Because my study was driven by theoretical propositions suggested by literature review, I used my research

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[5]   In order to prevent confusion with organizational commitment (OC), I will refer to observer's comment as OBC from this point on in this research.

questions as default categories under which I selectively filed the descriptive data. When unexpected themes emerged, I coded them separately and looked for connections to themes filed under default categories.

Wolcott (1994) explained that the researcher must give the reader a chance to draw his or her own conclusions in the analysis phase. To achieve this, I used direct quotations as samples of raw data. The direct quotes used in this research are verbatim, and I indicated my editorial insertions within brackets. I consulted Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion for displaying the data through graphic presentations, tables, charts, diagrams, matrices of texts under themes, and figures.

In the interpretation stage, the researcher goes beyond data and begins to probe "what is to be made of them" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36). Wolcott cautioned that some researchers ignore their theoretical framework and provide interpretations that have no relation to the proposed purpose of study. In my research, I constantly turned to theory in my interpretation and then extended the analysis. In the final section of conclusions, evidence from the qualitative interviews, document analysis, and participant observations will be discussed together.

<p align="center">Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research</p>

In relation to data analysis, I next will discuss relevant criteria for judging qualitative research. For quantitative research, the discussion of judging criteria focuses on the concepts of reliability and validity. In quantitative research, reliability generally refers to the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same result each time in repeated observation of the same phenomenon. Validity is the extent to

which a measure actually reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Kirk and Miller (1986), such a description of reliability and validity provided by quantitative social scientists "rarely seems appropriate or relevant to the way in which qualitative researchers conduct their work" (p. 14). They defined qualitative research's reliability as "the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research" and validity as "the degree to which the findings are interpreted in a correct way" (p. 20).

Kirk and Miller (1986) maintained that reliability hinges on "explicitly described observational procedures" (p. 41). They explained that reliability is meaningful "only by reference to some theory" (p. 50) and to put observations within a theoretical context, the researcher has to know the "cognitive idiosyncrasies" of himself or herself, which is to "say about his or her theories" (p. 51). For this reason, qualitative scholars often discuss their qualifications for the research and record their own epistemological orientations and feelings in the report.

According to Kvale (1995), validity has been defined primarily within the context of positivist epistemology. In a constructivist context, validation becomes the issue of "choosing among competing falsifiable interpretations, of examining and providing arguments for the relative credibility of alternative knowledge claims (Polkinghorne, 1983)" (p. 26). The researcher's ethical integrity and the quality of "craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings" (p. 27) are important issues in validation of qualitative research.

Lincoln and his colleagues (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) explained that in qualitative research, concepts such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace positivist concepts such as internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained the four criteria as follows. Credibility means the extent to which the subject of investigation is accurately identified and portrayed. It is similar to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research. Transferability is the extent to which the results can be extrapolated to other situations or groups, which is similar to external validity in quantitative studies. Dependability is similar to the reliability criterion of quantitative research. Confirmability refers to whether others can confirm that the results of the study do not just reflect biases of the researcher (pp. 296-300). I referred to these four criteria for evaluating my research, and I provide further discussion on evaluation in a later section of this dissertation.

<center>Reflexivity</center>

For qualitative data analysis, it is necessary to address the concept of reflexivity. Potter (1996) argued that because qualitative research is an interpretive act, researchers should acknowledge and share their own subjectivity and biases so that readers can make their own judgment about the study. Potter maintained that for this reason, a qualitative researcher should display a high degree of reflexivity.

According to Marcus (1998), there are four types of reflexivity: baseline reflexivity, Pierre Bourdieu's sociologically defined reflexivity, self-critical reflexivity in anthropology, and feminist reflexivity. The baseline form of reflexivity is associated with "the self-critique and personal quest, playing on the subjective, the experiential,

and the idea of empathy" (p. 395). Reflexivity in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology is tied to the commitment to "sustain objectivity, [and] the distance and abstraction of theoretical discourse" (p. 396). Self-critical reflexivity emphasizes locating the researcher in the "complex overlay of related, but different, accounts of almost any object of ethnographic interest" (p. 400) in order to establish his or her own subjectivity and define his or her own voice. Feminist reflexivity is referred to as experiential reflexivity, in which the researcher is committed to contesting "essentialist rhetoric and binarism (male/female, culture/nature) as a cognitive mode that has so biased toward rigidity and inflexibility questions of gender or 'otherness' in language use" (p. 401).

What Potter (1996) described as "self-reflexivity" falls under the baseline form of reflexivity. According to Potter, there are three ways a researcher can display self-reflexivity: describing decisions that went into selecting methods, laying out limits of knowledge in a particular study, and laying out the researcher's personal biases that might influence the conclusions (p. 188). Throughout this dissertation, I exercised the three ways suggested by Potter. In previous sections, I have described my reasons for choosing a qualitative case study. In chapter two, I have delimited my knowledge by discussing relevant concepts from different literature. I used memos and observer comments in my field notes to record my own thought processes, instant interpretations, assumptions, and biases.

<div align="center">Ethical Considerations</div>

In qualitative research, researchers often develop relationships that are ongoing and evolving with participants; so there are ethical issues to be addressed. According

to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), obtaining informed consent and protecting subjects

from harm are the two critical issues in the ethics of human participant research (p. 49).

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2000) also explained that consent, deception, and privacy are

three major aspects of ethics in public relations research. They argued that ethics of

research is a critical concern because of a growing reluctance to cooperate in research

projects. To maintain public confidence in research, ethical issues should be addressed.

Depending on the type of qualitative research, different ethical principles must

be applied. However, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested the following as general

principles. First, identities of participants should be protected not only in writing but

also in the "verbal reporting" of study results. Secondly, participants should be treated

with respect; and researchers should disclose their research purpose and the risks

involved in the study. Third, when the researcher promises something in return for the

permission to participate in the study, the promise or contract should be kept. Lastly,

when reporting results, the researcher needs to tell the truth, as in what the data are

revealing. Manipulation of data should not be attempted (p. 54). In my opinion,

different ethical issues arise throughout a study. These can be discussed in three

phases: gaining access, data collection, and analysis and reporting.

Gaining Access

One ethical issue is that of disclosure upon entering the research site. This

concerns the extent to which a researcher shares information about his or her

background and purpose of the research. Wolcott (1995) explained that a qualitative

researcher will have a relatively long-term interaction with participants, so it will not

be possible to maintain distance over the long run. His advice was to be "candid but discreet" (p. 151) throughout the research.

At the outset of the study, I contacted my participant organization with a letter (see Appendix I) that indicated my identity as a researcher and explained the purpose of the study. Upon my initial meeting with the contact person, I explained in detail the methods and the time commitment of participants necessary for the research. Issues of confidentiality and potential benefits the organization would get from participating in this research were also addressed. In the outset of the study, I asked for permission of the organization to let me disclose its identity at least to my dissertation committee members.

Data collection

For participants of my study, as requested by the Human Subjects Committee of the Department of Communication, University of Maryland, I prepared informed consent forms, which delineated the nature of study, whom participants can contact for further information, procedures to be used, and how I plan to use results of the study. Employees or community members were not forced in any way to participate in the study by the organization. All participations were voluntary, and participants were told they could withdraw from participation at any time. Before interviews, I asked for permission to record the interview and ensured confidentiality of the recorded content.

I conducted interviews with employees of the organization at the top management and at frontline levels to find out how they evaluate their relationships with the organization. These may have been sensitive questions to ask. Upper management might have wanted to know how employees evaluate their relationship

with the organization, which can be intimidating to lower-level employees. Thus, it was necessary for me to guarantee individual confidentiality within the organization.

This is what J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2000) referred to as the privacy issue. I made a pledge to take caution to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' responses throughout the data-collection process. For this reason, I asked for more names of employees than I planned to recruit from the public relations department. I then selected employees by arbitrarily contacting employees on that list. At the outset of this process, I explained to the public relations department that I would not disclose the names of those who were interviewed. At the beginning of interviews, I also explained to the employee participants that I would not reveal their names to others in the organization. I stored research records where the organization did not have access. Individual informed consent forms and record tapes of interviews will be destroyed after three years from the completion of my study.

Analysis and Reporting

In writing up results, I was able to disclose the name of the organization. However, for the employees and community members, I masked their identity throughout my report. I took caution not to provide any information that could directly lead to identification of the individual. I will provide an executive summary of research for the organization. Following an executive summary, a copy of my dissertation will be given to the organization. I sent thank you notes to individual participants. Should a participant request results of the research, I will provide him or her with an executive summary.

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CHAPTER IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before discussing results of the study, I provide background information on the organization and its public relations programs. Observational data and experiential information upon my entry into the organization follows to provide further context.

Introduction to Brookhaven National Laboratory

Background

Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) is a scientific research laboratory located in central Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. It is one of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) premier facilities. It is a multidisciplinary research laboratory focusing on non-defense, basic and applied research in a variety of fields, including physics, chemistry, materials science, biology, medicine, and applied technologies (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.a.).

BNL is home to world-class research facilities used both by nearly 1,000 scientists on location and over 4,000 academic and industrial researchers who visit the site from all over the nation and the world. BNL was founded in 1947 by a nonprofit educational consortium called Associated Universities, Inc. (AUI) under contract to the Atomic Energy Agency. The founders' aim was to build a regional laboratory that could provide researchers with powerful tools too costly for their home institutions to build and maintain (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.a.).

The Crises

In the United States, before the development of environmental consciousness, hazardous chemical waste was dumped without second thought. Because of activities in the lab's early decades, the site was found to contain pockets of contamination. In

1989, BNL was added to the federal Superfund National Priorities List,[6] and

remediation of soil, groundwater and other waste disposal areas has been proceeding.

Whilst the Superfund remediation was taking place, BNL encountered series of events

that led to major community relations crises.

In January 1997, BNL discovered and announced that there was radioactive

tritium in groundwater at the lab. Tritium is a naturally occurring, radioactive form of

hydrogen, which also can be artificially produced in nuclear reactors. The lab's

internal investigation revealed that the contamination at the lab was caused by a slow

leak in an indoor storage pool that was used to hold the spent fuel rods from the High

Flux Beam Reactor (HFBR). HFBR was a facility designed for neutron-scattering

research in medicine, biology, chemistry, material science, and physics.

Not long after this discovery was publicly announced, environmental activists

started protests, picketing in front of the lab. One activist even fasted in front of the

lab for 40 days, requesting the lab to take responsible actions. The lab made headlines

in the news media almost every day and it seemed as if it did not have a single

supporter in the community. The situation seemed to worsen with time when a

nationally broadcast talk show, Montel Williams,[7] aired a segment about BNL and

cancer on Long Island on January 9, 1998. The following is transcription of a teaser

for the Montel Williams Show:

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[6]   In 1980, growing concerns of citizens over the extent to which chemical wastes might affect
public health and the environment led Congress to establish the Superfund Program to locate,
investigate, and clean up the worst sites nationwide. The Environmental Protection Agency administers
the Superfund program in cooperation with individual states and tribal governments (Retrieved October
9, 2003 from http://www.epa.gov/superfund/about.htm).

[7]   The Montel Williams show is a daily, one-hour, nationally syndicated talk show starring
Montel Williams. Williams debuted as a talk show host in 1991. Issues affecting youth, domestic abuse,
welfare and the foster care system are topics of his show (Retrieved December 1, 2003 from
http://www.montelshow.com/about/bio.htm).

On screen: Actor Alec Baldwin[8] in color, split screen with boy in black &

white.

Alec Baldwin: "The reason I'm here today is because of something like this."

On screen: High Flux Beam Reactor at BNL, "Nuclear Labs" in ragged

typeface.

Announcer: "On the next Montel Williams Show, Alec Baldwin speaks out

about nuclear labs and high rates of cancer."

Alec Baldwin: (on screen) "These people are not voluntarily going to cough

up all the information we want—we have to take it from them."

Announcer: "Alec Baldwin speaks out—is cancer hiding in your

community? On the next Montel." (as cited in Bond, 1998)

A day prior to airing of the program, the following article appeared in the local

newspaper:

BRAVO TO Alec Baldwin, who spends an hour Friday in an exclusive

interview on the Montel Williams show discussing his latest cause, STAR–

Standing for Truth About Radiation. This organization explores nuclear

research centers such as Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island for

possible connections between labs and remarkable cancer clusters. The latter

have especially been found on Long Island. Baldwin, an LI native, appears on

the show with children who have rare forms of cancer. He and other experts

believe they are victims of radiation leakage from Brookhaven National

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8   Actor and activist born on April 3, 1958, in Massapequa, New York. He was in The Marrying
Man (1991) and in Prelude to a Kiss (1992). Other movie credits include The Juror (1996), The Edge
(1997), Hunt for Red October (1990), and Mercury Rising (1998). He also appeared in Broadway and
television versions of A Streetcar Named Desire (1995), for which he received an Emmy nomination
for Best Actor (Retrieved December 1, 2003, from http://infoplease.lycos.com/ipea/A0759873.html).

Laboratory. Says Baldwin: "Nothing would make me happier than to have a private, independent investigative team who went to Brookhaven come out from their research and say to me, 'You are wrong, and there is no threat of cancer from this laboratory.' Nothing would make me happier. We feel they owe us an answer." (Smith, 1998)

The talk show program reached its peak emotional state when an 8-year-old boy from Mastic Beach, Long Island described what living with cancer has been like:

"I know a lot of adults have said to you what they think has caused this. Why do you think you have cancer?" Williams asks the boy. "Brookhaven Lab," he responds, quivering next to his mother, Debra, after telling the rapt studio audience all he wants is to have a little fun in life. (Zehren, 1998)

The lab's own environmental investigation revealed that the amount of tritium leaked into the groundwater was in fact minimal and the contamination occurred within the groundwater on site and not off site. The initial water sample contained 41,700 picocuries of tritium per liter, which was higher than the federal standard of 20,000 picocuries per liter for groundwater ("Brookhaven finds," 1999). A picocurie is a unit of radioactivity; and one picocurie is one one-millionth of one one-millionth of a Curie, which is the quantity of any radioactive substance that undergoes 37 billion nuclear disintegrations per second (City of Monterey Park, n.d.). To make an analogy, the amount of tritium leaked into the groundwater was a 10th of a drop of water. Scientists explained that the amount of radiation caused by the tritium leak was much less than the sands at many beaches along the South Fork in Long Island (Garber,

1999). However, their efforts to relay such a message seemed to have little weight against the negative media coverage already far in progress.

Remediation through Community Relations

On November 17, 1999, the lab publicly announced their decision to close down the High Flux Beam Reactor (HFBR), which was seen as the source of tritium to calm down the outraged community ("Closing of Brookhaven," 1999). As another drastic measure, DOE terminated contract with AUI and Brookhaven Science Associates (BSA) was chosen as the new contractor, which was a consortium between a pharmaceutical company Battelle[9] and State University of New York (SUNY).

BSA was specifically charged to develop better community relationships by DOE. In addition to the environmental management programs instituted under the Superfund provision, the lab developed various community outreach programs. According to the director of public relations directorate, in the beginning stages, the lab benchmarked other best practices in community outreach for government organizations. Through implementation of pilot programs and enhancement of existing programs, the lab began to reshape their community relations programs.

Remediation was not immediate but progress was made. The lab began to reestablish damaged relationships with its communities through various programs and three years after the management change, the lab received the 2001 Organization of

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[9]   A non-profit research and development organization, Battelle develops new technologies, commercializes products, and provides solutions for industry and government. Their areas of expertise range from medical products and pharmaceuticals to products for the automotive, chemical, and agrochemical industries. They also develop environmental and energy solutions for industry and government, and technological solutions for challenges in national security, transportation, and health and human services (Battelle, 2003).

the Year Award from the International Association for Public Participation[10] for its excellent community relations programs.

Communication programs during and after the crises are the focal interest in this study. What is particularly of interest in this study is the fact that some of these programs included a great deal of employee involvement. In this regard, I focused on studying three major community relations programs within the organization: Community Advisory Council, Envoy Programs, and Summer Sundays. The top management, public relations practitioners, non-public relations practitioners, and community members who participate in these community relations programs, are participants of my study. Document reviews and participant observations also were conducted on these three programs. In the following, I provide descriptions of each program.

Community Advisory Council. BNL developed CAC as a forum for it to interact with the community on a regular basis. The CAC was a program developed shortly after the environmental scandal that took place during 1997 and 1998. It was comprised of a crosscut of stakeholder groups including local activist groups, civic associations, and employees. For the last five years, CAC convened every month at the lab to discuss issues pertaining to the community. For employees and CAC members, this program represented the way the lab and the community approached relationship building with various members of the community.

The draft charter written in 1998 states the purpose of CAC as follows:

The purpose of the Brookhaven Community Advisory Council (CAC) is to

ensure that the ideas, interests, and concerns of Brookhaven National

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[10]   Details of the award can be found at http://www.iap2.org/corevalues/cvawards-2001.htm.

Laboratory's communities are considered by the Laboratory in its decision-

making processes. The CAC's mission is to address concerns about the

Laboratory's policies and operations, explicitly those related to environment

and public health issues. (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 1998, p. 1)

The CAC was to also assist the lab in identifying effective mechanisms for consulting

with the community to ensure the interests of community are represented. CAC

meetings are open to the public and the CAC term of office is two years and is limited

to 32 members. Members must attend at least two thirds of the monthly meetings to

maintain their membership. According to the CAC coordinator, the turnover rate has

been quite low in CAC membership.

Through a third party group called the Brookhaven Executive Roundtable,

consisted of federal, state and local regulatory agencies and elected officials interested

in the activities of the lab, initial categories of interests and organizations representing

the interests were identified. The categories included local government, civic

organizations, business, education, environmental, activist, health, BNL industrial user,

labor, BNL employees, emergency response, senior citizens, and other interests

(Brookhaven National Laboratory, 1998). Letters were sent to representative

organizations in each category asking for their participation in the CAC. Organizations

that responded to the letter consisted the initial membership of CAC. First meeting

was held in September 10th, 1998.

I interviewed CAC members and public relations managers responsible for the

program. I made participant observation of one three-hour CAC meeting, in which I

was introduced as a student researcher conducting a study on BNL's community

relations programs. I recruited my interviewees at this meeting by circulating a notepad for them to sign up for an interview on a voluntary basis. Most members recruited have been involved in the CAC for at least three years.

Envoy Program. The basic idea of the Envoy Program was to explore the relationships employees had outside the organization. The Envoy Program implementation plan (Brookhaven National Laboratories, n.d.g) states that the goal of the Envoy Program is "to encourage and strengthen two-way, person-to-person communication between BNL personnel and key public opinion leaders."

The CEGPA directorate identified, interviewed, and recruited employees who are involved in community organizations as envoys. Envoys participate in monthly meetings where they learn about activities at the lab through speakers from different divisions of the lab. Each envoy is given an *Issues Notebook* that includes BNL press releases, fact sheets, newspaper clippings, community or civic association-generated fliers, reports, and newsletters. These materials help envoys to respond coherently to inquiries from community members about the lab. If envoys cannot answer specific questions from the community, they are to report back to the program coordinator for further support. Upon any envoys' request, the CEGPA directorate would connect right persons to respond to questions at hand. Envoys were to bring back any issues or concerns identified within their external communities. The Envoy Program indicates that the envoy's primary role is to listen to issues, opinions and perspectives of the community and not to promote the lab.

Prospective envoys are selected based on the following criteria:

A good listener and personable

A relationship-builder

Involved with personal, social, or professional organizations

Willing to devote time to review timely Laboratory materials

(Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.g)

Selection of envoys has been a rather casual process, where the program coordinator approached employees whom she knew were involved in external community groups or by referral from employees. For the initial program, 45 employees were recruited. I explored the Envoy Program mainly through interviewing the envoys and public relations practitioners responsible for the program.

Summer Sundays. Summer Sundays is an annual community outreach program BNL has been implementing since 1979. Before BSA, it was not an organized program and was simply a weekend tour of the lab. However, it now has expanded into a bigger production. In addition to the tour of the research facilities, Summer Sundays feature interactive educational science shows for children and family, meetings with scientists' families, and science displays. In general, Summer Sundays are held for 6 to 7 Sundays during the summer months, and according to the Summer Sundays coordinator, anywhere from 500 to 1,500 people visit the site annually.

In addition to the Envoy Program, Summer Sundays provided another venue for members of publics to interact with employees. I explored this event through interviews with employees participating in the event, making observations of the actual event, and interacting with visitors from the community.

Other programs. In addition to the three major programs of interest in this study, the lab had other community outreach programs such as the Speaker's Bureau

and the Volunteers In Partnership (VIP). The CEGPA directorate manages list of

employee speakers who can give talks about various topics that include basic science,

medical research, environmental safety, or any other topics related to the lab's

activities. A designated staff at the CEGPA directorate coordinates speaking schedules

and handles request for speakers from local schools or community groups.

VIP is a program most recently launched to provide networking opportunities

and to help support employees in their volunteer efforts with limited funding. It was

designed to raise the community's recognition of the lab's employees and retirees as

good neighbors and valued members of the community. A newly formed VIP

Advisory Committee, comprised of employees from scientific and support

organizations, as well as a representative from the retired lab employees, reviews each

project proposal. However, projects involving nonprofit agencies that represent

advocacy groups, special political interests, or a specific religious affiliation are not

eligible for the VIP Program (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.h.). I have

interviewed employees who participated in these programs as speakers, advisory

committee members, and who had received award from the VIP program, and

observed a VIP advisory committee meeting.

Entry to the Organization

My entry into the organization required advanced planning. After September

11, 2001,[11] security measures were raised to a higher standard; and all visitors had to

go through several procedures to gain access to the organization. In March 2003, with

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[11]   Act of terrorism committed on September 11, 2001 by an international terrorist network, Al
Queda. Monumental buildings such as Twin Towers in New York City and Pentagon in Washington
D.C., were attacked within a day with hi jacked commercial planes. Number of casualties from this act
counted for more than 2,900 (Retrieved November 11, 2003, from http://www.time.com/time/covers/
1101020909/index.html).

help of the lab, I was registered as a student researcher with the lab's human resources department. An on-site dormitory was assigned for me to stay during my 7-week research period.

Windshield Survey of BNL

A windshield survey is a preliminary research technique often used in ethnographic research (Gerberich, Stearns, & Dowd, 1995; Whitehead, 2001). Prior to conducting interviews or collecting documents, through personal observations about people and the environment in which they live and work, the researcher documents his or her composite perceptions about the research setting. I conducted a windshield survey of the lab during the first few days on site.

On May 26, 2003, I landed on Long Island and drove to the lab with a rental car. I drove up the Long Island Expressway (LIE, Interstate 495), the main highway that covers the entire island. The road was a typical urban highway with little scenic view, and there were major retail stores and shopping malls along the exits. However, there were no sky risers or mega malls around the immediate area of the lab. The closest restaurant and grocery store were at least a 10-minute driving distance. After approximately 40 minutes, I was able to locate the lab. As I followed the sign for the lab, it was hard for me to imagine there would be any large research establishment around this road.

However, the map given to me at the security gate soon gave me an idea about the scale of the lab. There were no modern, tall, visible buildings in the lab. They were mostly one or two story buildings spread out through 5,300 acres of land. I soon realized that my initial plan for biking around the lab was not likely. I eventually had

to rent a car during my stay to get around the lab to interview employees and community members with the help of the public relations department. Scattered throughout the site were several large-scale research facilities. Most noticeable research facilities were a series of heavy ion colliders used by physicists and other scientists. One of the colliders has a 2.4-mile circumference.

Before it became a national laboratory, the site was used as a military training camp during World War II until 1946 (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.b.). Many buildings still had the military barrack structure and design, and buildings were added onto the existing buildings. I arrived on the site during the weekend, and there were few signs of people within the lab. "It is easy to feel isolated here during the weekends," a public relations practitioner told me when I met her the next day as I shared my experience with her. The lab's location was such that it was far removed from the hustle and bustle of any cities. Many scientists and visitors reside on site in residential areas with their families. However, most of the employees live outside of the lab.

Orientation and Training

During the first week after my arrival, I was issued an identification badge for re-entry to the lab. Before I could conduct any research, I had to go through a series of orientation and training sessions that were required for all new employees or visiting researchers. I was given lab policy documents regarding sexual harassment, equal employment opportunity, medical care and health, security and lab protection, emergency information, and ethics in the conduct of research. I had to convene with

other new hires of the lab for a General Employee Training (GET) to receive training on environmental safety and health.

I watched an introductory video about the lab's history and its accomplishments. We were also taught about definitions of environmental hazards, how to read warning signs around the lab, radiation levels, and what to do when an environmental hazard was detected. We were told to find a designated safety coordinator responsible for the building we work in and were told to check where the emergency exits are and the gathering places are, should an alarm go off on site. I also went through mandatory on-line training and testing on national security, environmental stewardship policy, and internet policy.

Great emphasis was put on environmental safety throughout my training. One employee told me that in his opinion, this lab has the most highest environmental protection standards among the national labs in the United States. The environmental stewardship policy document stated specific principles an employee should know in protecting the environment:

It is Brookhaven National Laboratory's (BNL) policy to integrate environmental stewardship into all facets of the Laboratory's missions. We will manage our programs in a manner that protects the ecosystem, and employee/public health.

In support of this policy, BNL makes the following commitments:

- We are committed to achieving compliance with applicable environmental requirements.

- In consideration of the potential impacts of our activities on the environment, we will integrate pollution prevention/waste minimization, resource conservation, and compliance into all of our planning and decision-making. We will adopt cost-effective practices that eliminate, minimize or mitigate environmental impacts.

- We will define, prioritize, and aggressively correct and clean up existing environmental problems.

- We will work to continually improve our environmental management system and performance. We will establish appropriate environmental objectives and performance indicators to guide these efforts and measure our progress.

- We will maintain a positive, proactive, and constructive relationship with our neighbors in the community, regulators, DOE, and our other stakeholders. We will openly communicate with stakeholders on our progress and performance.

All Staff have a role in achieving the policy commitments. (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.e)

The Community, Education, Government, and Public Affairs Directorate (CEGPA)

At BNL, the Community, Education, Government, and Public Affairs (CEGPA) directorate was the function responsible for all public relations activities. In this research, I refer to this directorate as the public relations function. Throughout my residency on site, I maintained close contact with this division, in particular, with the Community Involvement (CI) program staff. After the training, I was given an office

space within the CI program building, where I could make phone calls, use computers, and conduct interviews with employees when necessary. Within CEGPA, most of the office spaces that I visited were minimally decorated; and office spaces were all in close proximity to each other to maximize space out of the old barracks designs. There were no luxurious or fancy decorations throughout the buildings. In the second week of my research, I was given a facility tour by one of the CI staff with other summer undergraduate interns.

Early on, I was introduced to the CI program manager and her staff. Most of the staff members I was introduced to were women. Many of them were very personable, made me feel welcome, and showed interest in my research. Throughout my fieldwork, I frequently interacted with these staff members. The atmosphere was somewhat similar to what I have experienced in universities, in which students, faculty, and staff seemed to have collegial relationships with each other.

The CI staff's openness and kindness made me feel at ease; however, I reminded myself to keep appropriate distance as a researcher. I kept a little notepad wherever I went and wrote down any significant observations or thoughts I had during the day. CI staff members were in midst of preparing for upcoming summer programs and were very busy. Many of their days were filled with meetings at other buildings, making calls, follow-up calls, and tending to other administrative tasks. Another factor mixed into this business was the coming of a new lab director. Departmental reporting for the new director was in progress. The CI manager provided access to relevant documentations and helped me identify initial participants to start the interview processes.

Complexity of Stakeholders at BNL

In addition to the multiple publics the lab has to deal with externally, I found that there are complex layers of internal influencers at BNL. Prior to entering the field, I had rather simplistic notion about the lab. I considered BNL to be a single entity; however, what I found was that there were several different groups involved in its formation. One of the top managers told me in his interview that it takes some time to understand how the organization evolved into its current complexity. In this study, I did not attempt to delve into the issues of organizational evolution or power structure of BNL, although recognition of these existing layers was important to grasp the context of study.

BNL is a government owned contractor operated (GOCO) facility. The DOE owns the lab and BSA is the contractor responsible for management of the lab. In this sense, BNL is comprised of its contractor organization BSA and scientists who conduct research on site in various divisions. When I met the lab director at his reception, he also explained that he had three bosses as a director: the scientists, BSA, and DOE. Several public relation practitioners told me that they are often challenged by the complex layers of the organization in implementing their programs as they have to take into account the different expectations each group may have about them.

BNL is specifically affected by the tri-part agreement between the Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Department of Environment Conservation, and the Department of Energy, in its environmental policies. According to a public relations practitioner, Suffolk County Legislature is also nationally regarded as a model for environmental sanitary code it adopted.

Employee Categories

In addition to the complex layers of organizations involved in the formation of BNL, there are employee categories unique to the lab. As mentioned briefly in the previous section, scientists are employees who conduct research at the lab. Within each of the research divisions and facilities there are technicians who design, operate, maintain, and fix research equipment and installations. Employees other than technicians manage diverse organizational functions such as human resources, community involvement, and procurement. Top management of the lab also falls under the supporting category. Participants of this study often referred to these support staff as the "overheads." Although not employees of the lab, there are also a large group of facility users that come to the lab to use research facilities, including graduate students on fellowships or post-doctorates.

Community Profile

According to S. Schensul, J. Schensul, and LeCompte (1999), using data and information collected by others can save valuable resources. In addition, use of secondary data can further enhance the comprehensiveness of data collection and understanding of the results. Secondary data can be defined as "qualitative or quantitative raw data collected for governmental, research, or other purposes" (p. 202). In this research, I have collected some secondary data. In the following section, I discuss findings from Census data about the county population within which BNL is located, to gain a general sense of the immediate community surrounding the lab.

Census data. According to Census 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), the total population of Suffolk County in 2000 was 1,419,369. In terms of age, 18% percent of

the population was in the mid 30s, 14% in the 50s. Senior citizens over 65 also comprised 11.8% of the population. Caucasian American was the most dominant race, which comprised 85% of the population. African Americans followed them with 7% and Asian Americans with 2.4%. In terms of household types ($N = 469,299$), 62% were married couples. Out of these married couples, 31% had children under 18. Twenty five percent of the households had individuals who were 65 years and over.

In 1999, 22% of the households made an annual income between $50,000 to 74,999. Seventeen percent made between $75,000 to 99,999. Median household income was $65,288, and mean earnings were $78,901. As for educational level, 16 % of people over 25 years of age ($N = 942,401$) had Bachelor's degrees, 12% had graduate or professional degrees, and 31% high school degrees. Within the civilian population of 16 years and over ($N = 683,052$), management, professional, and related occupations comprised 36%; sales and office 29%; and service 14%.

History of activism in Long Island. Long Island is also well known for its celebrity residents in the East Hamptons[12] and their involvement in environmental activism. High-profile public figures such as Christie Brinkely[13] and Alec Baldwin were some of the key influencers who vocally opposed the lab's activities during the tritium crises.

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[12]   East end of Long Island, South Folk region. It is renowned for its 50 miles of Atlantic Ocean beaches, seas, fishing and rural maritime charm. Also known for it popularity among celebrities who have chosen the Hamptons as their sanctuary (Retrieved October 1, 2003, from http://www.licvb.com/south_fork.cfm).

[13]   Model and actress born on Feb 2, 1954 in Malibu, California. American supermodel whose 20-year contract with Cover Girl (1976–96) was the longest-running contract in the modeling industry. Brinkley's nine-year marriage (1985–94) to pop singer Billy Joel was highly publicized. She appeared in Joel's music videos and in the John Hughes's comedies, National Lampoon's Vacation (1983) and Vegas Vacation (1997) with Chevy Chase. (Retrieved December 1, 2003, from http://infoplease.lycos.com/ipea/A0762081.html).

Brinkley and Baldwin were both board members of the STAR (Standing for

Truth About Radiation) Foundation, a group formed in 1997 by Long Island residents

concerned about effects of radiation on public health. She became the key

spokesperson for the foundation and actively sought closure of the HFBR during the

late 1990s. Alec Baldwin is also a supporter of the Radiation and Public Health Project

(RPHP), a nonprofit educational and scientific organization, established by scientists

and physicians dedicated to understanding the relationships between low-level,

nuclear radiation and public health. Alec Baldwin is heavily involved in RPHP's on-

going *Tooth Fairy Project,* in which the organization is attempting to prove the extent

to which radiation is affecting human bodies and how it raises the risk of cancer by

collecting and analyzing baby teeth of Long Island children. In 1999, Baldwin wrote

15,000 solicitation letters to Long Island residents to give their children's baby teeth

for the study and was a presenter at seminars held by RPHP (Curran, 1999). Many

employee participants of this study believed that this high profile activism contributed

to the highly negative media coverage of the lab's crises during the late 90s.

Based on the Census data, Suffolk county has a significant adult population

over 30 and is a family-oriented area where the majority of people own a house and

higher portion of people working in professional or management jobs. Financially, the

Suffolk county population is relatively secure with mean earnings of $78,000. Another

interesting fact is that majority of the population were Caucasian Americans. Active

celebrity environmentalist residents were also a unique characteristic of the

community.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents what Wolcott (1994) described as the "analysis" phase of the research process. In the analysis stage, the researcher attempts to go beyond the raw data by making "a systematic effort to identify key factors and the relationships among them" (p. 10). In this phase, the researcher offers the reader an opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions. The information presented in this chapter includes direct quotations, excerpts from documents, and citations from relevant secondary data. In this study, I organized my data analysis around the initial research questions I proposed.

Public Relations Excellence

To gain a broad understanding of the organization's structure and its public relations practices, I developed Research Questions 1 through 3 around the concepts of excellence principles and organizational climate. I believed that exploring the excellence theory in the case organization would allow me to determine the organizational foundations necessary for the public relations function to enact its role in the integrative management of internal and external relationships. I asked top managers and public relations practitioners questions regarding the lab's public relations structure. In order to explore the internal communication system and organizational climate, I also interviewed non-public relations employees. In addition, I reviewed documents such as organizational charts and Web sites and observed organizational meetings. In the pages that follow, I discuss the findings associated with each research question.

Structure of PR Department and Public Relations Behavior

In order to explore the structure and practice of the case organization's public relations function, I posited the following research question:

RQ 1. How do participants characterize the organization's public relations practice?

At BNL, the public relations function is considered a major management practice. The head of the public relations division explained that she is a member of the dominant coalition. With a direct reporting relationship to the director that is reflected in the organizational chart, she is actively involved in strategic decision-making processes. The head of the public relations division holds the official title of assistant laboratory director (ALD), which expresses her role within the organization. The lab director explained that the ALD is involved with all of the policy councils, and he said that he meets with her three times a week.

According to Dozier and L. Grunig (1992), the public relations function should be integrated into a single department in order for it to achieve a strong presence within the vertical structure of the organization. The location of different public relations functions in a single department facilitates the efficient use of scarce resources. Before the management change at BNL, various communication functions were scattered throughout the organization. During the crisis, DOE asked the division head to integrate these functions in order to operate them more cohesively. As a result, Media Relations and Communication (MRC), Environmental Management Community Relations (EMCR), Community Involvement (CI), Laboratory Web Content (LW), and Educational Programs (EP) now report to the ALD. By integrating

different programs that focused on various audiences surrounding the lab, the CEGPA

directorate gained a broader perspective on the management of critical relationships.

In the lab director's words, the directorate is providing "a unique perspective as to

how the world outside of us view us." Speaking more specifically, the public relations

ALD explained that her directorate focuses on its relationships with surrounding

neighbors, elected local and state officials, the business community, the academic

community, the science community that uses the lab's facilities, and employees.

The Community Involvement (CI) manager described this integration as a key

strategic direction for the organization. Before the integration, the CI manager had

served as a one-person community involvement operation; in this role, she was unable

to relate to the overall mission of the lab. Now that the function has been integrated,

she explained, CEGPA is able "[to] support the mission of the laboratory, protect the

laboratory, and promote the laboratory" through its activities. Findings from my

observation of two one-hour CEGPA staff meetings were consistent with what the

ALD and managers told me. I was able to observe the integration process at work. The

ALD of CEGPA led the meeting, and personnel from each program reported on their

bi-weekly activities. Through this meeting, staff members were apprised of activities

that were taking place within the directorate. In the meeting, personnel from all

programs exchanged opinions, offered recommendations, and searched for

opportunities to collaborate. The ALD also presented the results of meetings she had

attended with top management and informed her staff about new initiatives and

movements in the organization.

As one CEGPA manager told me, the meeting can be described as a conscious effort "to focus as one unit" and to focus on "enhancing the lab's mission" through activities within the directorate. Each program has unique objectives and philosophies in terms of building relationships with different sectors of the public. For instance, Media Relations and Communication (MRC) seeks to publicize the lab through the mass media, while the Community Involvement (CI) program attempts to build relationships through interpersonal channels. One manager told me that she thought of MRC as the "mouth" of the organization and of CI as the organization's "ears." At the meeting, the ALD emphasized that while each program targets a specific audience, all departments eventually contribute to the development of extensive relationships with strategic publics.

One of the top managers I interviewed also regarded the CEGPA directorate as a "coherent program" that has departed from the ad hoc approach that characterized the previous structure of public relations under the old management. Since the creation of the program, he added, it is not always necessary for him to go out into the community; he can now devote more of his time to his other responsibilities as a senior officer. In other words, he indicated that the public relations directorate was successfully operating as a function that manages external relationships for the organization.

Depending on the issues at hand or the target audiences, different communication models are employed by various departments. If the lab makes a new discovery, for example, MRC uses one-way, mediated communication to reach out to the general population. When there is an environmental issue that may affect the

community, EMCI or CI uses interpersonal communication techniques such as public meetings and forums in addition to mediated communication strategies. Practitioners also visit community members door-to-door with information when necessary; this practice is referred to as "canvassing." When dealing with regulators or the legislature, two-way, interpersonal communication is the initial mode. While working closely with the Web content team, MRC programs also rely heavily on mediated forms of communication such as TV, broadcast, and print media. Meanwhile, ECR, CI, and EP use a mixture of mediated and interpersonal communication. The more sensitive an issue, the more these programs engage in interpersonal communication as their primary means of discourse.

The purpose of communication behavior among participants seemed to show a coherent pattern. According to L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002), symmetrical communication behavior is characterized by the use of research and by having the goal of collaboration rather than one-way persuasion. The managers at CEGPA have adopted a similar outlook, as they consider research to be important component in communication management. The CI program, for example, conducts an annual survey to collect data on community opinions concerning the lab and its activities. At the CEGPA staff meeting, the MRC manager presented benchmarking research data on other national labs' media relations practices to provide support for her proposed program.

Rather than simply persuading members of the community to have favorable opinions about the lab, managers at CEGPA want their communication programs to enable community audiences to make "informed decisions" about the lab. As the MRC

manager explained, managers "just want the story to be accurate more than anything."

This manager saw her role within the organization as a facilitator for information

exchange and not as an instrument for covering up something the lab had done wrong.

Because she cannot change the fact that a particular incident has occurred, her task is

to "try to manage the way it is described, or the way people are interviewed, or the

images that go out." Instead of attempting to manage the public perception of BNL,

the MRC manager sought to manage the organization's response behaviors. Overall,

BNL's public relations programs tended to display more symmetrical than

asymmetrical communication characteristics.

In terms of the ethical dimensions of communication, BNL's practice showed a

mixture of deontological and teleological characteristics. Within the realm of public

relations practice, a deontological approach concerns itself with rules about "the right

thing" to do, while a teleological approach is concerned with the consequences to

which decisions lead (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996). CEGPA has several informal

rules that guide its ethical behavior. The Educational Programs (EP) manager

illustrated the CEGPA directorate's deontological approach by explaining that

CEGPA has an informal rule that it should strive to remain as a "neutral source" for

teachers. Teachers, he said, sometimes face ethical dilemmas when companies

promote a particular product or business in classes. A comment made by the CI

manager also highlighted another informal rule of the communication programs. As

this manager explained, if a community member elects to write an editorial on BNL,

the decision should be based on his or her personal judgment. Instead of trying to

"grab a person to write an editorial [it] has got to be their choices. We present them

with information and let them decide. You might be able to ask their opinions, you go in and you get feedback and hope they may take the next step and write something in their heart of hearts."

However, practitioners also approached the task of communicating negative information about organizational consequences on publics with a teleological ethical disposition. After the tritium crisis, the organization openly admitted the mistakes it had made, thus evincing its teleological ethics. Reinforcing this view, the lab director stated, "If we do any harm [to the community], we must tell the community what we have done and then take steps to remedy it."

According to J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996), utilitarian rules provide a starting point for public relations because it reminds practitioners to consider an organization's behavioral consequences on its employees, clients, and the larger society. However, they also argued that utilitarian theories fall short in addressing the inherent subjectivity and injustice in the conflicting loyalties and interests. Thus, they suggested that practitioners look to deontological rules of ethics that outlines the obligations or "unyielding principles." J. Grunig and L. Grunig cited Pearson's (1989) public relations ethics in this regard. According to Pearson, it is a moral imperative "to establish and maintain communication relationships with all publics affected by organizational action" and "to improve the quality of these communication relationships, that is, to make them increasingly dialogical [symmetrical]" (p. 377, as cited in J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996, p. 35). In conclusion, J. Grunig and L. Grunig maintained that public relations should combine both the deontological and teleological rules of ethics.

Overall, in the case organization, in that the public relations practitioners and top managers were concerned about the consequences they may have on publics: They were approaching public relations with teleological disposition. However, they also followed deontological rules when the practitioners tried to establish and maintain relationships with publics affected by organizational decisions.

Summary of RQ1

Research Question 1 dealt with structural issues and the public relations behavior of BNL. BNL's public relations directorate held a seat at the dominant coalition meetings, and the ALD reported directly to and had regular meetings with the lab director. A completely integrated function, the public relations directorate encompassed different communication programs under one leader. The CEGPA directorate, however, employed different communication models depending on the issues being discussed and the target audiences. The more sensitive the issue, the more frequently interpersonal communication methods were used in tandem with mediated communication. The directorate's external communication behavior displayed more symmetrical than asymmetrical characteristics. As for the ethical dimension of the public relations, the CEGPA directorate followed both deontological and teleological rules.

Because employees were of key interest in this study, it was essential to employ a research question regarding the organization's internal communication. In the next section, I extend the discussion of the organization's structural issues and communication behaviors, focusing on the internal communication system.

Internal Communication System

A symmetrical internal communication system was proposed as one of the excellence principles. According to J. Grunig (1992b), such a system makes an organization more effective, as it facilitates the construction of open, trusting, and credible relationships with strategic employee constituencies. In order to further explore the organization's internal communication system, I proposed the following research question:

RQ 2. How do employees characterize the internal communication system of the organization?

J. Grunig (1992b) proposed that an internal communication system functions throughout an organization, as it operates concurrently at both the interpersonal, group level and at the mediated, organizational level (p. 568). He argued that an excellent system of internal communication reflects principles of symmetrical communication, while interpersonal communication makes symmetrical communication easier.

Furthermore, J. Grunig (1992b) stated that a symmetrical internal communication system is characterized by the extent to which employees are able to comfortably express their concerns with their superiors, are encouraged to have ideas and opinions that may differ from those of their supervisors, are presented with opportunities to participate in management's decision-making processes, and are informed about major changes that may affect their jobs. He explained that various types of formal media, such as the employee publication, supplement interpersonal communication at the organizational level. I organized my findings according to the

two categories suggested by J. Grunig: the organizational communication system and the interpersonal communication system.

Organizational Communication System

While conducting my research, I observed that no single unit was primarily responsible for communication with or about employees. Divisions such as human resources and public relations both maintained responsibility for internal employee communication. Recently, however, the lab initiated a review of existing employee communication programs in order to form an integrated system. Charged with this task, the CEGPA designated a staff to work on the development of a coherent employee communication plan. The CEGPA staff member told me the following:

> I think basically we are the communicators. So we work with the Human Resources, we work with Emergency Response, we work with Security, to get this information to employees. And it has been this office's job to do that work. It's just that there has not been a specific person responsible for it…[we are trying to have] an established employee communication program and plan and make sure everything is brought together.

As evidenced by this response, the CEGPA directorate's role in employee communication has been limited to editorial functions that primarily use one-way communication models. In other words, information conveyed to employees was limited to media such as employee newsletters, magazines, e-mail listservs, and the intranet. In my interviews with employees, most equated employee communication with the aforementioned employee publications from the CEGPA division.

One employee attested to the fact that while the newsletter tends to contain "sanitized feel good" news, it does not provide employees with in-depth information about current activities in the lab. Most publications issued to employees can be described as one-way directed media, which tend to be more asymmetrical than symmetrical. The only exception to the previous statement is the Monday Memo publication, a bi-weekly e-mail update written by the director. Employee publications, despite their shortcomings, remained an important source of information for the employees. The recent BNL employee focus group results (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003a) showed that employees considered publications such as the bulletin, the lab newsletter, and the Monday Memo to be credible sources of information on lab-wide issues, thereby confirming my findings.

Most employees advised me that they viewed the Monday Memo as an important source of information. "The Monday memo is something I find is credible," "Monday Memos, you can directly send e-mails to the director and they are addressed," and "Monday Memo [is trustworthy] because it is published," were common responses from the employees. As mentioned by one of these employees, an employee can e-mail the director if questions or issues regarding topics discussed in the Monday Memo arise. Depending on the nature of the question, the director would either respond individually to the employee or post more general responses in the following Monday Memo. Most employees seemed to find the personal aspects of this form of communication appealing.

Within the Human Relations department, several employee relations programs had already been implemented, such as Conflict Resolution Committees and the

Employee Concerns Program, which were designed to deal with grievances or other work-related issues. In addition, there was a third-party peer advisory council independent from Human Relations department. Most employees acknowledged that the organization had these mechanisms in place, as this employee told me: "The systems are there. They are there if one wants to use them."

However, several non-managerial participants were unsure whether the communication channels available to employees were actually used by their peers. One participant said: "We have employee systems and those things but I think most employees don't see them really for their benefit but see them as a management tool and that they are there because they are governed to be there. I think people usually don't go there if they truly have issues." A non-managerial employee said that while she was aware that various channels existed for employees to raise their concerns, she was doubtful as to "whether the problem will be fixed" by engaging those formal mechanisms. Another employee expressed that she has never used such channels to voice her concerns. What follows are insights and patterns I discovered about interpersonal communication through my interviews with employees in non-public relations positions.

Interpersonal Communication

Jo, Shim, and Kim (2002) argued that within the context of relationship management in public relations, employee communication should be redefined as "building favorable relationship between management and employees," (p. 2) instead of focusing on "mediated communication techniques" (p. 2). In this regard, they argued that the interpersonal aspect of employee communication becomes critical.

Most non-public relations employees interviewed informed me that they had not perceived any constraints on their ability to express their opinions or issues. When questioned, one employee advised me that he has "friends in almost any department." He further explained that he feels very comfortable raising issues or concerns to his superiors. This particular project manager informed me that he had recently met with the new lab director to discuss problems within his department. Another manager told me that having a roadblock in upward communication "is not an acceptable situation."

Regardless of their position within the organization, most employees considered their immediate personnel resources (e.g., division heads and colleagues) as more meaningful venues of internal communication than lab-wide systems when they faced problems at work. This finding was in line with Cameron and McCollum's (1993) research. The research discovered employees' preference of direct interpersonal communication over mediated communication for information on organizational issues such as future of the company and things that affected their jobs.

One employee disclosed that his most trusted communication venue was "the people channels." Another employee said that he felt "connected enough" and could talk to people he knew on a one-on-one basis about his problems as they arose. Another employee told me, "For me, it is my supervisor [that I go to when I have issues]. If it was something I needed to go somewhere else, he would tell me who to go to." More than half of the non-public relations employees told me that they were not afraid to voice their concerns to their superiors. I heard the following comments to this effect: "I can't think of any issue that I can't bring up" and "I have always felt

pretty comfortable [voicing concerns]." Such comments suggested that the lab's interpersonal communication system possessed symmetrical characteristics.

Employees also pointed out that the nature and level of communication greatly depends on the individual superior personnel at any given time. One participant expressed discomfort about approaching her previous division head with issues. Similar feelings were recently discussed in an employee focus group (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003a) conducted by the lab. Non-managerial employees expressed varying levels of confidence in the system. One participant expressed the idea that "the ALDs can discourage communication" but that "cross-communication really depends on the individuals," while another felt that "the official communication is good, but supervisors don't always communicate the need-to-know information for our jobs." Individual communicative abilities of immediate supervisors or division heads, as such, were an influential, if not a primary, factor in achieving a symmetrical interpersonal communication system.

This finding is in accordance with J. Grunig's (1992b) argument that interpersonal communication is important in the development of a symmetrical communication system in organizations. In this regard, D'Aprix (1988) maintained that communication training for managers is critical in achieving symmetrical interpersonal communication. J. Grunig (1992b) further argued that communication training of employees should be in place throughout the organization.

Leadership's Communication Behavior

During my interviews on internal communication systems, employees repeatedly discussed the leadership's communication behavior during the crisis.

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Several employees brought up how the announcement of the closing of the high flux beam reactor (HFBR)—from which the tritium leaked—left many employees upset. "When the HFBR closed, we heard it on the news…it was a shock and that cannot happen again," one employee told me.

The following excerpt from a newsletter captures the sentiment among the lab employees at the time:

> Even before they arrived for work at Brookhaven National Laboratory on New York's Long Island on 16 November, the employees had heard or read the grim news: Energy Secretary Bill Richardson would announce later in the day that the lab's high flux beam reactor (HFBR) would be permanently closed. Officials at the lab were stunned. Neither Richardson nor anyone else at the Department of Energy (DOE) had informed them of the impending shutdown. On a visit to DOE labs in New Mexico, John Marburger, Brookhaven's director, only learned of Richardson's decision when he returned to his hotel and received an emotional call from an aide. "Everyone was shocked that we got sandbagged," declared Thomas Sheridan, deputy lab director for operations. Some lab scientists said they felt betrayed, recalling that Richardson's predecessor, Federico Peña, had promised that the reactor's future would be determined by serious investigation and dispassionate evidence—a process that, after all, is the foundation of science. (Goodwin, 1999)

DOE's communication behavior seemed to have added to the high level of anxiety the employees were already experiencing because of the tritium crisis and management

change. The new leadership of BSA, however, took a different approach. One employee told me the following:

> John Marburger, he was former president of _____. He's a Walter Cronkite figure on Long Island, somebody you could trust. He was a superb person for the job at the time. He would talk to anybody and everybody, just really great. He was doing focus groups with employees to rebuild trust in the lab, when everybody was unsettled.

John Marburger's approach can be seen as symmetrical in that he tried to listen to employees' concerns by conducting focus groups and talking directly with employees during the crisis. The new management's symmetrical approach was also reflected in what the human resources manager told me:

> We had as a part of the tritium remediation program, we had a group of people and I was one of the people, and people from specific areas of information on reactors, from the environmental area, from plant engineering area, and I think we had about 20 talks. We went from department to department to department.

As seen in the human resource manager's response, during the time of the crisis, the lab reached out to the employees through interpersonal communication to inform them about the nature of the crisis and to address their concerns.

Jo, Shim, and Kim's (2002) study showed that there are positive relationships between management's communication styles such as empathic communication and meaning-making communication and employees' level of trust toward the organization. In a way that was similar to Jo et al.'s findings, the leadership's symmetrical communication behavior influenced the way BNL employees

characterized the organization's internal communication system and their level of trust in the organization.

Summary of RQ 2

Overall, BNL's internal communication system showed more symmetrical characteristics than asymmetrical. Most employees did not fear to express their concerns to their supervisors. However, the success of upward communication, in the view of employees, is dependent on individuals at the supervisory level. This suggests that the lab needs to develop the interpersonal communication skills of superiors and managers in order to achieve a coherent symmetrical communication system. If the public relations department carries out formal training sessions to instruct employees regarding symmetrical communication, it will allow the lab to initiate an explicit rule of symmetrical communication in its internal communication practice rather than having to resort to individual managers' competence.

As J. Grunig (1992b) explained, the organization's formal media seemed to supplement the interpersonal system in that employees regarded employee publications such as the Bulletin and e-mail communication from the director as credible sources of information. In particular, employees' positive attitudes toward the Monday Memo indicated their preference for symmetrical communication, as it permits them to communicate directly with top management. The leadership's communication behavior also emerged as an important factor that influenced employees' evaluation of the internal communication system. However, in the realm of employee communication, the public relations department's role remained limited to the production of employee publications.

Climate for Internal and External Relationship Building

In the conceptualization chapter, I proposed using the concept of "climate" in place of the excellence study's "cultural context." According to B. Schneider, Gunnarson, and Niles-Jolly (1994), organizations create a climate that is defined as the atmosphere perceived by employees through their practices, procedures, and rewards. Climate researchers argue that the atmosphere experienced by employees is transferred to the public via external exchanges. The quality of interaction between the employees and the publics affects the public's opinion of or behavior toward the organization.

I posed the following research question in order to determine whether the organization's climate contributed to development of a positive relationship with both internal and external publics and whether the identified climate was indeed transferred to external publics through employee-public interactions:

RQ 3. How do participants characterize the organization's climate for internal and external relationship building?

Climate for External Relationship Building

Most participants in this study said that the lab strongly emphasized building positive relationships with the external community. After the management change, the climate regarding external relationship building changed significantly. In the section that follows, I have organized my findings about climate under the rubrics of organizational practices/procedures and rewards.

Organizational Practice/Procedure

Leadership behavior. When I asked participants which practices or procedures reflected the organization's emphasis on relationship building, many mentioned the current leadership's behavior. Participants frequently pointed to Jack Marburger as the person who set the tone for community relationship building throughout the lab. One participant described Marburger's style as follows:

He would talk to people. He engaged them, he listened more. They [the community] just had more access. He would, if my community [the employee's community] as taxpayers, say they want to hear from the lab, Jack went. He would say: "Here I am, I am the director of the lab. I am not sending out a representative, I am not sending out an environmental guy." They were hearing right from the horse's mouth and not some kind of derivative.

One participant described Marburger as a "Walter Cronkite figure on Long Island, somebody you could trust." Employees said his behavior represented management's commitment to the rebuilding of external relationships with the community. Jack Marburger, the new director who was installed after the management crisis, provided a great contrast from the climate of the previous management, which was described as "arrogant" proponents of "intellectual elitism." One participant reported that the previous management would make comments such as, "We will tell the public when they need to be worried." These leaders believed the mission of the lab was to produce good science, and that everything else lagged far behind in importance. One participant remembered the climate in the following manner: "We just didn't see the point to invest the time and effort, money, resources into the

community. So when things started to go bad, we had nobody there to come to our defense." However, participants told me that they did not see the previous management or the leader as necessarily being the "bad guys." They told me that the management simply did not communicate well with its communities.

Marburger strongly encouraged the lab to recognize that other elements of management are just as important as the pursuit of science. One participant described the shift instigated by Marburger as a "mindset" change that took place throughout the organization, rather than as a simple move toward equal funding for community relations and the development of science. According to Woodall (2003), employees "scrutiniz[e] senior leadership actions and also the fundamental value propositions of their organizations" (p. 12). As Woodall argued, leadership has to "walk the talk" in order to foster a certain organizational climate; otherwise, employees will not embrace the value propositions promoted by the organization (p. 12).

In my review of internal and public documents, BNL's commitment to community relationship building became quite apparent. The following quote from BNL's Community Involvement Policy Statement (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.d) illustrates this commitment.

> It is BNL's policy to ensure that the ideas, interests and concerns of its
> stakeholders are considered in program planning and decision-making
> processes that affect the community or the general public. This policy is
> intended to bring a broad range of viewpoints and values into program
> planning and decision-making before decisions are imminent to enable the

Laboratory to make informed decisions and to build mutual understanding

between the laboratory, its stakeholders and the general public.

The laboratory's mission statement also indicates, "Brookhaven's broad

mission is to produce excellent science in a safe, environmentally benign manner with

the cooperation, support and appropriate involvement of our many communities"

(Brookhaven National Laboratory, 1999, p. 9). Another document describing job

duties and performance criteria for managers provided evidence of internal

organizational practices supporting community relationship building. Senior managers,

for example, are expected to adhere to the following standards:

Responsibilities: Ensure proper communication of Laboratory plans to the

community and community input regarding those plans.

Accountabilities: To DOE, for effective and pro-active community relations.

(Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.c)

Line managers are expected to perform the following:

Responsibilities: Comply with Laboratory requirements for identifying issues

with community impact, and developing and executing community

involvement action plans.

Accountabilities: To Laboratory Management, for proper identification of

issues of community impact, and effective development and execution of

community involvement action plans. (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.c)

Community involvement training. In training managers in the community

involvement process, the lab exhibited further evidence of an overarching climate for

positive external relationship building. *The Community Involvement and Laboratory*

Decision-Making Handbook (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.c) was written as a reference for line managers and others at the laboratory to provide guidance in conducting community involvement activities. According to the handbook, all line managers are expected to "embrace the need for involving the community in issues and decision-making, when appropriate" (p. 2). Senior managers within the organization undergo a one-on-one training process with the CI program based primarily on this handbook.

The handbook offers detailed descriptions of principles and resources available in the planning, development, and implementation of community involvement programs. The five principles described in this handbook are as follows:

1. Community involvement will begin early in every appropriate project or decision-making process.

2. Every community involvement process needs to have a clear connection to a specific issue or decision.

3. How a specific decision relates to other decisions (especially higher-level decisions) will be made clear throughout the process.

4. The way and degree to which community involvement will or will not affect the decision will be clearly stated throughout the process.

5. The segment of the community that may be affected by the decision will be defined. (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.c., p. 3)

Determining whether an issue requires community involvement is the first step. The handbook provides a checklist to allow managers to personally assess a situation. The checklist includes questions such as the following: "Is community involvement

required by law or agreement?" "Could the decision affect sensitive components of the ecological system on and/or of the laboratory?" "Could the decision affect the quality of life of the members of the community?" "Could the issue impact one or more values (needs, concerns, priorities or interests) within the community?" and "Based on your evaluation of the issue, will a decision be better made by involving the community?"

When managers determine that community involvement is warranted, the next step is to determine at which level the decision-makers should be involved and how a community involvement team should be established. The manager responsible for a particular issue works with the CI office to identify members for the community involvement team as well as to design and implement action plans. The handbook outlines strategies managers can employ, including community surveys, door-to-door visits, community roundtables, small group meetings, and community workshops. Once a plan of action has been agreed upon, the next step is to implement the plan and involve the community in the issue. Finally, the handbook directs managers to conduct evaluations regarding the effectiveness of community involvement.

According to a recent internal report (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003c), 80% of senior and mid-level managers have been trained in community involvement and decision-making process. This training was one of the key procedures highlighting the lab's emphasis on external relationship building on the managerial level. The handbook also identifies employees as members of the BNL community and states that when they identify issues of importance, they should bring the issue to their immediate supervisors' attention (p. 3).

Paid time/departmental support. Most employees confirmed that the organization encouraged and supported community involvement by permitting them to take time off for community outreach. "Well, we are allowed to do that," an employee told me. One employee explained that he is paid for his time when he engages in a public speaking function. The time he takes off for such an engagement is not charged as vacation time. Participants also said that their departments or divisions supported their outreach efforts. According to a CEGPA manager (anonymous, personal communication, April 2, 2004), officially, employees can use up to 10 work-hours per year for community outreach related activities such as attending training sessions and meetings. However, she added that many employees tend to volunteer their non-working hours in community outreach activities.

CEGPA as communication counselor/hub of information. Employees also said they believed that having a separate directorate for community outreach programs encourages external relationship building. Participants reported that communication efforts vis-à-vis the community were not as visible prior to the crisis and under previous management. In fact, community involvement was little more than a one-person operation; and other communication functions such as media relations and education programs were under disparate directorates. CEGPA now is integrated into one central directorate staffed by more than 30 people, thus allowing for more cohesive internal and external communication.

An employee explained the importance of the CEGPA directorate:

Having people that are trained, know, and able to correspond with the

community is a valuable asset to the scientist, engineers, and all others

working at the lab. I know that there are things that go on in the lab that I have very little knowledge of. [For example, the] water treatment plan, storm sewer system. Addressing [various] issues to the public and retrieving the fact in detail from different offices around here [the lab] and then putting them in means of easy digestion for public consumption, I think becomes an extremely valuable asset for the lab.

This employee maintained that the CEGPA directorate functions as "the center point for dissemination of information to the public," thereby lessening the burden on other lab departments.

When faced with a difficult communication situation with the external public, employees familiar with the objectives of the public relations directorate considered it a valuable resource. Throughout the course of my personal observations, I expressed surprise on several different occasions to the CI manager when someone called her to ask for input on an external communication matter. The manager advised me that such telephone consultations, in which she discussed appropriate ways to communicate messages in public, were central to her job. When an issue required further action, she would refer some callers to the media relations department for additional assistance. One employee related the following story to illustrate the ways in which the public relations directorate helps members of the organization to communicate with external publics:

There was a guy named _____ , who lives two doors down from me and his daughter has got some disease. And he thinks the lab gave it. When I take my garbage down he comes up and screams at me. And I go to [CI Manager]

and ask, "How do I handle this guy?" So she'll teach and say, "This is how I would handle it." I have done it many times. So there's a really good exchange and they never blow me off.

Organizational Rewards

Institutional rewards. According to the CEGPA director, approximately 15% of employees volunteer for community outreach efforts out of a total population of 2,887 employees. Although there is no monetary incentive to participate in outreach activities, volunteers receive institutional recognition through annual luncheons, plaques, and service certificates. According to a member of the CI staff, there were approximately 400 employee volunteers in 2003 recognized for their involvement in community outreach programs.

Personal rewards. When asked what rewards they received for their community outreach efforts, many of the employees responded that they participated in these activities for their own "personal gratification" rather than to receive recognition from the lab. Although many enjoyed institutional recognition, participants would not have volunteered if they did not find these activities inherently satisfying. Employees' remarks such as "I don't need external reward. I think it is part of my job to do this" and "I do it because I want to do it" were common.

Community outreach efforts provide employees with depth to their organizational lives. Working in the community allows one participant to break out of his daily routine while the interaction with external community members reenergizes him. Another employee who gives lectures at local schools about his research told me that interacting with students makes him think about new ideas or solutions. This

employee also displayed letters, pictures, and cards he received from his audiences, which confirmed that the rewards are "pretty personal." This employee appreciated the assistance he receives from the CEGPA directorate, which coordinates his speaking engagements and provides support staff. BNL has been able to develop a nurturing climate for external relationship building; however, in the realm of internal relationship building, a different picture emerged.

Climate for Internal Relationship Building

Although employee participants acknowledged the lab's support of external relationship building, several employees expressed the feeling that they were secondary to external publics. Because of the crisis that occurred five years ago, many employees said they felt that the lab has been preoccupied with the remediation of relationships with external community members. One participant described this situation with the following analogy:

> It's like a family thing. Who is ever hurt and having surgery is the person
> that's getting the most attention and the other child and the other person is sort
> of hanging out over there. After a little while that person's like, "Hey, how
> about me?"

Another participant reported similar views; he said he believed the lab put more effort into community relations than into employee relations. Since the lab's employees had also endured tough times during the crisis, there was a shared feeling of being "left out on the back burner" among some employees. Employees often told me how things had changed for them during the crisis and when the new management entered. At the time

of this study, another new lab director had arrived, and this seemed to add to the uncertainties employees were experiencing.

BSA vs. BNL: Need for Creation of an Internal Community

According to the participants, AUI, the previous management, made mistakes in its handling of the crisis. However, AUI's management style was considered less bottom-line oriented than that of the current management. The atmosphere under AUI, as described by one employee, was more akin to that of a "university" that emphasized research and thinking. This employee hoped that the lab would return to a less business-oriented atmosphere. Another employee told me the lab used to be a more "familial organization" than it is now.

When I asked whether the lab expressed concern for employees' interests and for the organization as whole, one employee was "hesitant" to say yes, as she was undecided about the current management's commitment to employees and their interests. Another employee answered similarly; his response was "slightly positive but not 100%." Yet another employee said that 20 years ago, he would have answered yes to the question, but he was "not so sure" these days, as the current organization placed too much emphasis on "numbers." Put simply by one employee, the familial climate "is not perhaps the way it used to be." Most employees, however, still viewed the lab as better than other organizations in terms of taking care of employees.

The change of management also seemed to have contributed to employees' views about the division between scientists and support staff under the new management. In particular, scientists expressed concerns over this division. One scientist said,

The administrators would sometimes forget that they are here because we are here. They are to administer the lab because we are doing science that brings them money, and they [administrators] are seen sometimes by the scientists as thinking that we are here because they are here. If we weren't bringing in the grant they wouldn't be here. So there is some friction.

The support staff also expressed concern about this division. As one employee explained, the lab needs a campaign to help all people think of themselves as "employees of one BNL," because the lab cannot survive without scientists and support staff. She thought that, "It is more difficult than the [external] publics and it is equally going to take much effort."

In my interview, the new lab director said the division between support and science staff was one of his main concerns. He explained:

Sometimes there can be discussions concerned with support and sometimes with science. Science side might say that the support side uses the money we bring in, and the support side will say that without us you can't do your science. So there are obviously discussions that are present in this lab. One of the things that the director has to do is to make the two sides understand the needs of each other so that they work together. If you like, that is another issue that senior management at the lab have to face. That is within the lab there are cultures.

At the time of this study, efforts to build an internal community among subgroups of employees had been minimally successful at best. In other words, few formalized

organizational practices or procedures had been employed to encourage

communication and relationship building between different employee groups.

Summary of RQ 3

Data from interviews and documents offer evidence of a climate that

emphasizes positive, long-term relationship building with the external community.

The lab currently possesses a concrete set of organizational practices, procedures, and

rewards that foster such a climate. One of the important organizational practices that

encourages a climate for positive external relationship building, as viewed by

employees, is the visible leadership. Non-managerial employees cited allowance of

time or paid time and departmental support of their community outreach activities as

the most significant practices stimulating external relationship building. An integrated

community relations function, as exemplified by a public relations directorate acting

as a consultant to employees in need of guidance or advice when dealing with external

publics, was also regarded as evidence of organization-wide support for the

overarching community ideology. In addition to institutional rewards, such as free

luncheons or plaques, employees considered personal gratification an important factor

that motivated them to participate in community outreach programs.

In interviews, however, employees' comments suggested that the lab might

need to shift its attention toward developing a climate conducive to positive employee

relationship building. The management change continues to have a dramatic impact on

employees' perceptions about the organization itself, as well as on the perceived

cultural division between scientists and support staff. At the time of my inquiry, few

concrete organizational practices, procedures, or reward systems were in place to

foster internal relationship building between disparate groups; however, the lab has been initiating movement toward the ultimate goal of internal relationship building. The public relations director recognized the need to focus more on employees and stated that she was planning to "correct the imbalance of [the directorates'] focus in communication." She explained that the lab intends to conduct a series of employee focus groups to examine issues related to communication. At the time of this study, the director had also begun to conduct breakfast meetings with different levels of employees to find out "what's on their minds."

<div align="center">Relationship Management Theory</div>

As discussed in the conceptualization chapter, relationship theories comprise the central focus of the theoretical framework of this study. The purposes of the research questions regarding relationship management were twofold. Firstly, I wanted to further refine the OPR concepts by exploring their application in a real-life context. Secondly, by exploring the roles employees play in relationship building with external publics, I sought to investigate the nature of links among employee-public relationships, employee-organization relationships, and organization-public relationships. In proposing the three research questions, I was able to deal with the first purpose. Findings associated with this purpose are discussed next. I present conclusions regarding the second purpose of the research questions in a later section.

In previous discussion of the relationship literature, I asserted the need to further develop a general definition of OPR. I proposed to explore subjective perceptions of participants about OPR. In addition, I attempted to answer the call in the field for a more co-orientational approach to relationship research and proposed to

explore both the organization and the publics' viewpoints on the concept of organization-public relationships. In tandem with the suggestions of Hon and J. Grunig (1999), I also attempted to identify new relationship cultivation strategies.

OPR from the Participants' Views

I proposed Research Question 4 in order to explore subjective perceptions concerning OPR among participants of this study:

RQ 4. When do participants of this study perceive they have developed an OPR?

For managers and employees of the organization, use of the phrase "relationship with the community" was quite natural. BNL employees told me that before the tritium crisis, BNL was an "invisible" entity that was not on the external publics' minds. According to participants, the lab became a visible organization within the community and actively initiated relationships after the tritium crisis. As an employee told me: "The lab had a lot lower profile [before the crisis]. Much of the people in the neighborhood didn't know we existed. We were isolated and happy to have it so." He explained that the lab learned how it cannot "just ignore the public and hope they will do the same for [the lab]" through the crisis. The lab, implementing the lessons learned during the crisis and the management change, put greater effort into community outreach in order to develop better relationships with its communities.

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) explained that an OPR occurs when an organization's behavior affects the public or vice versa. In interviews, BNL employees expressed understanding of the potential consequences of BNL's behaviors on the community, as well as the potential impact of the community's behaviors on their

organization. Echoing Hon and J. Grunig's thesis, employees of BNL viewed behavioral consequences of the organization as initiating active pursuit of OPR development.

Community members, by the same token, expressed more consciousness of their relationship with the lab after the tritium crisis. Their perceptions about OPR, however, appeared to vary according to the length or depth of their involvement with lab-related issues and their personal experience with the lab. For instance, CAC members, who tend to have a high level of involvement in lab-related issues, had no trouble describing their association with the lab as a relationship. Non-CAC members who discussed their relationship with the organization generally reviewed their personal experience with community outreach programs that entailed continued interaction with the lab. A member of a local taxpayers' association defined having a relationship as having frequent interaction with the lab. He further explained that when issues were resolved and interaction phased down, he found that the relationship dissipated. When asked whether he felt he had a relationship with the organization, he said the following:

> As the issues phased down, we had less and less contact…when we had so much conversation back and forth with them, maybe in 94, 95, 96, 97, in that era, yes we had a lot of interaction. We were up there at the lab sometimes at their invitation and they came to virtually every meeting [the monthly taxpayers' association meeting].

Another community member from a property owners' association considered her interactions with the lab to be a relationship:

Oh, most definitely [we have a relationship with the lab]. Anytime there is a problem or you know, back when there was this tritium leak and so forth, I mean they were just great. If any member had a question, I just, you know a phone call away. Oh, I have taken members on tours there already…I think it was shortly after the tritium thing the lab reached out and you know, sent a liaison monthly.

Two other community members pointed to their frequent visits to lab premises for community outreach programs such as Summer Sundays and cultural events as reasons why they thought they had a relationship with the lab.

By contrast, community members who told me that they were not so involved in lab-related issues or were not frequent participants in community outreach programs expressed hesitation or completely dismissed their association as a relationship. One respondent said that because the lab was "too far removed from [my] actual day-to-day life," she does not consider herself as having a relationship with the organization. Another community member told me that he "wouldn't call it a relationship"; rather, he said, he had an "awareness" of the lab.

When I questioned a school official about his relationship with the lab, he asked: "You mean me personally? Or my school?" As a school official, he engages in a relationship with the lab through the exchange of resources; for instance, speakers from the lab come to the school, and the school sends student interns to the lab. As an individual, however, he did not necessarily think he had a relationship with the lab. He was not greatly affected by the tritium contamination and was not terribly concerned about it. He separated his association with the lab as a professional from his

association as an individual; depending on his level of involvement in either capacity, his views on OPR differed.

In conclusion, participants found OPR to be a concept applicable to the association between the lab and themselves when each party recognized behavioral consequences on the other, when both were involved in the issue or the problem resulting from the behavioral consequence, and when the parties had repeated interactions with each other regarding the issue or the problem.

Summary of RQ 4

Findings of this study supported Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) argument that OPR develops when an organization and its publics have behavioral consequences on each other. For BNL and its surrounding community members, the environmental crisis prompted the active development of OPR. However, depending on the personal relevance they accorded to an issue and their level of involvement in lab-related issues, community members' points of view varied about applicability of OPR. More involved community members who actively participated in outreach programs accepted the concept of OPR more readily than those who did not. In my interviews with the participants of this study, it appeared that frequency of interaction was a factor that affected subjective perceptions of OPR.

When participants stated that they thought they had a relationship with the organization, I inquired further regarding their evaluation of the quality of said relationship as well as their definition of a mutually beneficial relationship. In the next section, I discuss my findings related to the research questions posited for this purpose.

Quality of Relationships and Types of Relationships

In the conceptualization chapter, I discussed Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) relationship constructs. According to Hon and J. Grunig, trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction describe the nature of OPR. In this study, I explored how the organization and its publics describe the quality of their relationships. Furthermore, I explored how the organization and the public would define a mutually beneficial relationship. As the following two research questions were closely related to each other, I will discuss them together.

RQ 5a. How do participants characterize the quality of their OPR?

RQ 5b. How do participants characterize a mutually beneficial OPR?

In interviewing public relations managers, top managers, and community members who acknowledged a relationship with the organization about their current relationship, I canvassed individuals as to how they would define a mutually beneficial relationship. Instead of providing them with specific relationship dimension terminologies, I directed the questions along the dimensions developed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999). The participant responses were organized as to how they related to the four relationship dimensions.

Before beginning the discussion, I would like to make a note to readers. During my interviews with managers and practitioners, I discovered that nearly all of them believed that the CAC represented the surrounding community. Many of their responses regarding the quality of relationships with the community were based on personal experiences with CAC members. In order to gain coorientational insight, I

attempted to pair managers and practitioners' responses with those of CAC members. I will identify responses from non-CAC members, which I also discuss in this section.

Quality of Relationships

Trust. A good relationship with the external community, according to the lab director, is indicated by the community's level of trust regarding the lab's actions should another crisis arise. He said:

> I think the way I look at it is, if in the future if something worse was to happen, and I can say, "Look, this is what happened, and here is its significance, and here is how we are going to deal with it." If that meeting is constructive and they say: "Yes. I think we'll help you this way," then we have established a good relationship. If on the other hand, when I call this meeting and they start beating on me, then I know that they never did develop relationships where they trusted us.

Another top manager explained, "If you do have a relationship where somebody trusts what you say, [it] makes life much easier in that they [the community] will give a benefit of the doubt. So you need to build trust." For the management as a whole, trust was the most important indicator of a good relationship as well as critical dimension for public relations practitioners. Trust, in fact, was a key performance measure against which the public relations directorate was evaluated. According to the CI manager, all community involvement programs were developed with the basic goal of building trust with the community. When asked about the lab's current relationship with the community, one practitioner confidently stated: "At times, they [CAC members] have waited for information. I think we've tried their patience at

times and yet they continue to give us the benefit of the doubt. They trust us that we are not shortchanging them or we are not holding something back from them. As soon as we have the chance or approvals to release something, [they know] that we will [release information]."

When I asked CAC members about the dimensions of the relationships they felt they had with the organization, most members told me that the current level of trust was much higher than in the past. In explaining why the lab was able to build trust with the CAC, a member told me the following:

> They [the lab people] would bring back information, experts will fly in and do a presentation about [the issue], and they [the lab] would take you on a tour of facility, and they [the lab] were seemingly forthcoming. There was not the level of trust there is today [in the past].

Another member grew to trust the lab because unlike the previous management, "[the lab] worked with us [the CAC]" by providing open access to information. According to another member, the change in the level of trust was dramatic: "When Dr. Marburger took over, you could meet the director, you could call his office and he would call you back. So that alone evokes a greater feeling of, [although] you don't know if he truly does, but evokes a greater feeling of communication and trust, at least sincerity." At the same time, however, most council members were cautious in giving trust to the lab. "While they have been getting us materials and what not, but frankly, [I think] when they present things, they put best light on it," one member said. Two of the members expressed their concerns about how members can sometimes get lulled into agreement with the lab. According to one of these individuals, members tend to

think, "I can see all the numbers O.K., O.K., O.K., and stop questioning." Both members emphasized that it is critical that members continue to challenge the lab during meetings.

Non-CAC members who perceived that they had a relationship with the organization told me that they had seen the lab keep its promises. One of those members related the following story as an example of the lab's trustworthiness. According to the member, the lab went above and beyond its responsibility by paying for the installation of a public water system for community households affected by groundwater contamination. Some stated that they trusted the lab because the lab shared information and invited community members into the lab. However, two community members expressed concerns that they did not possess the necessary frame of reference to interpret the scientific reports or information provided by the lab. As one of these individuals said: "How is one who is not trained in that field [science] know whether it [information given by the lab] is precise or not?" Similar to this response, another member said: "There is no frame of reference unless you are a physicist, you know. You are skeptical about whether there [information given by the lab] is truth to them or not." Like the CAC members, non-CAC members were hesitant to give their full trust to the organization.

Both the lab and the community members maintained that the overall level of trust had significantly improved after the tritium crisis. The CAC members, however, considered themselves independent watchdogs, and were thus more cautious about trusting the lab. Many participants told me that the lab's openness and willingness to provide access to information had led to an increase in their level of trust. In a sense,

they were describing cultivation strategies that are effective in developing trusting relationships. I will discuss cultivation strategies in greater detail in a later section.

Control Mutuality. The control mutuality dimension refers to the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to exert influence. By asking participants to describe the extent to which input from CAC members affected the lab's decision-making process, I was able to explore this dimension. As CAC is an advisory board, all top managers and public relations practitioners reported that not every suggestion would alter major decisions. However, significant suggestions made by the CAC do get integrated into the final decisions of the lab, as evidenced by the following statement of a top manager: "CAC discussions are taken very seriously." He continued: "They are not a decision-making body but advice-making body. At the same time, they come up with very good suggestions and you in fact change the way you were thinking. So in fact they have a significant role." From this top manager's perspective, when community opinions influence the decision making-process, better choices are made. Public relations practitioners also believed that comments made during community meetings encourage the management to consider the bigger picture in which it operates. The CEGPA ALD described the integration of community opinions as "having a tough boss." Overall, however, the management perceived the community members to have somewhat limited control over the decision-making process.

Most CAC members believed that they have limited control over the organization's behaviors that affect them. "Well, they listen…implementing things? I don't know," one member told me. Another participant told me that she questioned

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how much weight CAC members' opinions carry in the lab's decisions. Most CAC members, however, believed that their opinions were considered seriously. Throughout the anecdotes related by the members, indications abounded regarding the council's influence over the lab's decision-making process. For example, a council member told me:

> We didn't know if we had any effect or not. But then came the opportunity to lobby DOE for more funds in a short period of time to influence the cleanup faster, to get it cleaned up quicker. We sent letters, signed them, and sent them in so they [DOE] knew this had a large backing and that everyone felt this was the right way to go and that seemed to have worked. Because it was approved to speed up the cleanup. They had [planned] it initially [to be] done by 2006 [and after our effort, they changed it] to have it done by 2004. We believe we had a lot to do with that.

Another CAC member illustrated the same principle by telling the following story about the placement of a water treatment system. The lab had proposed a plan to install a water treatment system; however, members of the council took issue with the chosen site. Since the lab did not ask opinions of neighbors who live in the immediate area of the proposed site, the council was concerned enough to conduct their own study by surveying immediate neighbors and the general community. Based on their findings, the CAC suggested an alternate site that was a dump area. The lab reviewed the CAC's suggestion and eventually agreed to the alternate site for the location for the treatment system. In general, council members felt that their opinions were

afforded a considerable amount of weight, but had mixed feelings about the extent to which their opinions had significant influence.

Non-CAC members who believed that they had a relationship with the lab told me that they had no "direct" control over the lab's actions that affect the community. One member said, "I probably have a right to information but I am not sure if I really have any controller effect." According to another member, the only way to exercise control over the lab is via the ballot box. As a general rule, non-CAC members felt they had limited control over what the lab does that affects their community.

The lab and community members related similar evaluations about the control-mutuality dimension. Concurrent with the lab's view that community members have somewhat limited control over the decision-making process, community members also felt the imbalance of control in their relationship with the organization.

Commitment. The top managers agreed that the lab was committed to building positive relationships with external communities, and confirmed that it planned to maintain an ongoing dialogue with these communities through CAC meetings. Public relations practitioners recognized management's commitment to the process of relationship building, citing management presence at CAC meetings as noticeable evidence thereof. Public relations practitioners referred to lab policies concerning community involvement as further evidence of management's high level of commitment to good community relationships.

CAC members frequently noted that leadership presence at council meetings affected their perception of the lab's commitment to the relationship-building process. "The director is there," one member told me when asked for evidence of the lab's

commitment. She also added: "How many people do you see show up from the lab? The whole damn room is filled with them and that's typical [of CAC meetings]."

"Lots of times, the managers, workers are in the audience [at the CAC meeting]," another member observed. For him, the presence of the managers and workers meant that they would "listen," and, "if they can respond and they can get something done, they'll do it." Another member said "the quality of the leader" is made apparent in the meetings, and she believed the leadership's presence at CAC meetings indicated the lab's serious commitment to "involving the community in the process."

The resources and information provided by the lab confirmed its commitment. "They have made substantial resources available whenever the CAC asked for a report or to be educated on a certain topic. The lab makes people available [to community groups]," one member said. Another member described how lab employees "extended themselves" by participating in community meetings and providing resources upon request. A CAC member shared her sense that the lab was "extremely committed," because even for negative or "tough issues that [the CAC] goes after, they just gave [her] all this information."

"It's an ongoing relationship," as one member put, most council members viewed their relationship with the lab as long term. As one member said: "They [the lab] are not going to pick up and move. Well, I am not going to pick up and move. So we go forward." Another member felt that the lab knows her group is not "going away." She and others shared their conviction that the lab should be committed to their relationship. "CAC is one of the best things they have done for community

relationships," said a member. "If I was the lab, I would be doing this for the life of the lab."

Non-CAC members also saw the lab as committed to community relationships. These individuals said the lab's ongoing outreach efforts, such as the CAC, Envoy Program, and the presence of leadership within the community, were indicators of the lab's commitment. One member told me, "The fact that they brought in the college president type [Jack Marburger] to head things up" gave a clear indication of the lab's commitment to community relationships. Community members considered that making envoys available to community groups was further proof of the lab's commitment.

Satisfaction. Top managers were relatively satisfied with their current relationships with the CAC, especially compared with former relationships during the crisis. They were, however, cautious about the volatile nature of these relationships. One top manager explained the issue thus: "For example, if you don't see items in the newspaper that are extremely negative, then your relationship is O.K. If you see positive things on media, you can say your relationship is good. But that can change in a flash. Unfortunately that is the way it is." Communicating with the community in a crisis has a life cycle, he said—people become less interested as time progresses, but entering a "proactive period" is important, as one never knows what will happen next.

The CI manager and other public relations practitioners expressed satisfaction with the relationships they had built with community members at the CAC, highlighting the incredible change in the quality of their relationship with the community. The CI manager said that during the crisis, they "were starting at ground

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zero basically. Although we had relationships within the community, some of those relationships were still rather solid but others were waning and it was very difficult to engage those folks [who] were very disappointed in us." She was satisfied that now the lab and CAC members have a certain level of trust in and respect for one another.

CAC members indicated varied levels of satisfaction with their relationship with the lab. Responses among the members included: "I guess it is O.K. If you wanted a scale it would be in the middle," "fairly satisfied," and "very satisfied." One member said "[she] would be staying home," if she were totally satisfied with the relationship. However, she rated her satisfaction with the lab as an 8 out of 10, indicating she was, in fact, quite satisfied with the relationship. Members positively referred to the lab's efforts to participate in their own organization's meetings and to provide timely information to the CAC. It was made clear that the lab and the members had gone through rough times, but had patiently worked together to achieve the level of mutual respect they now have.

Non-CAC members also told me they were relatively satisfied with their relationship with the lab. These individuals were also pleased with how the lab had opened itself up, shared information and resources, and invited them into the organization through community outreach efforts such as Summer Sundays and cultural events.

Types of Relationships: Mutually Beneficial Relationship

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) described two basic types of relationships. A communal relationship is one in which both parties involved are concerned for the other's interest. By contrast, in an exchange relationship, one party is willing to give

benefits to the other because it expects to receive benefits of comparable value in return.

In this study, I wanted to explore how participants would define a mutually beneficial relationship. As Hon and J. Grunig (1999) suggested, I considered a communal relationship to be the ideal relationship for an organization to build with its constituents. In this study, however, characteristics of mutually beneficial relationships given by both the organization and community members did not specifically fit with either of the two descriptions given by Hon and J. Grunig.

One top manager offered an example of a good relationship from a legal perspective:

Let's say we are on a trial and we got a jury. It's much better to have a jury to think that you're a good member of the community, doing good things, rather than you are a bad actor and have in their minds that whatever the plaintiff says must be true because we know these guys are bad. It's much better to have them saying what the plaintiff is saying must be wrong because we know these people [at the lab] and they are conscientious and smart and good members of the community. It's like any personal relationship.

This manager felt a good relationship would exist between the lab and the community if the lab had support even in the face of a negative situation. Other top managers described a mutually beneficial relationship as one in which the lab is an intellectual and economic resource to the community, while in return the community provides workers and elects officials who support the lab. The lab director used the term "symbiotic" to describe such a relationship. A public relations practitioner

explained that the lab shows respect for, and provides resources to, the community

through its involvement in such programs as the CAC. He explained that the lab

expects and hopes that the community will reciprocate by supporting its efforts.

One CAC member defined a mutually beneficial relationship in the following

way:

I think…the lab is more dependent on the community than they used to be

[now] that they found natural shared interest. We may not be doing the same

things for the same reasons. If we are doing it together, [and] we are better off

than we would be if we weren't, we see the mutual utility of collaboration.

Another member felt that different groups within the council were collaborating with

the lab and other organizations in order to advance their own interests: "The CAC

became, I believe especially early on, a forum for those organizations to further their

own agendas."

The parties in this relationship were motivated by their common goals and

interests and showed less interest in the concept of a communal relationship. None of

the participants described a relationship in which each party is more concerned about

the other's interest than its own. One CAC member's response illustrates the sentiment

held by the CAC as a whole: "We don't get what we want but we get some of the

things." This drive for mutual benefit is also illustrated by the comments of a member

of an activist group.

I only care about this greater drive to protect the environment, so I don't care if

they [the lab] do it for self-motivation. I really don't. I only care what the

results are. Because that's what's important and I think that if the community

gets better results, I don't care.

In this sense, for participants of this study, a mutually beneficial relationship was one

in which everyone's goals and expectations were met at some level. Participants in the

present study described a mutually beneficial relationship in terms most closely

matching Hung's (2003) description of a symbiotic relationship, one in which both

parties recognize their interdependence and work together for a common interest.

Development of Multiple Public Relationships

An interesting theme emerged in my interviews with the CAC members. In

addition to their new relationship with the organization, many members were surprised

by the relationships they developed within the CAC. According to managers of

CEGPA, the diversity of the group initially created problems. "It was actually hostile

in the beginning stages," the CAC coordinator recalled. "There was a great deal of

hostility, anger, and animosity. In the beginning, I would have a knot in my stomach

before every single [CAC] meeting." Each of the participating community groups had

its own agenda and showed no interest in listening to the other groups. A member of

CAC recalled: "There were charges going back and forth among the different

organizations. Thirty organizations that are on the body have very different interests

and those interests often conflict [and] there was a combination of distrust of the lab."

Members had differing viewpoints and showed little interest in moving from

their positions. In order to mediate conflicts within the meetings more effectively, the

lab, with CAC approval, brought in a third party moderator. A CI staff remembered

relationship building with community members as a "painful" process.

While the meetings were difficult in the beginning, five years of monthly meetings brought about gradual changes in group dynamics. One council member related the following story to illustrate the changes she has witnessed over the years.

> We have a conflict right now at the CAC about fish consumptions in the Peconic River. We [her organization] are going to be advocating probably for the strongest cleanup levels than any other CAC members advocate for. Now if we did that five years ago, they [other CAC members] would have been angry and hostile. But I really think now: "O.K., that's what they really think. That's what they believe in." I have five years of working with these people. They are not trying to discourage environmental regulations. They really feel that that's their opinion. So I don't agree, but [I am] certainly not angry with it.

CAC members have come to understand and respect each other's perspectives, and they are able to work together as a group to resolve laboratory issues. One CEGPA manager appropriately described the current dynamics of CAC as "we agree to disagree."

Summary of RQ 5a & b

The lab and community members had similar perceptions of the quality of their relationship. Both sides felt the element of trust was critical to the quality of the relationship, particularly since community members experienced a limited level of control. Each party perceived a high level of commitment by the organization to build community relationships. Everyone was relatively satisfied with the current relationship, especially when compared to their relationship during the crisis.

When asked to describe a mutually beneficial relationship, neither party's description precisely fit the definitions of a communal or exchange relationship. Rather, it resembled what Hung (2003) described as a symbiotic relationship, in which both parties realize interdependence and work together for a common good.

The CAC meetings also served to create relationships among different community groups. Most members described a transition from hostility to respect among the groups. In the end, through the CAC program, the lab not only provided a forum for the creation of OPR but also for the development of community-to-community relationships. Members found that, compared to the early days of CAC meetings, they now have more trust in each other and more satisfying relationships with one another.

I further probed participants to discover what organizational behavior, including communication style, they thought contributed most to the state of their current relationship. Following is a more detailed discussion of cultivation strategies.

Effective Cultivation Strategies for OPR

Cultivation strategies are "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" (J. Grunig, 2002, p. 5). In this study, I attempted to discover strategies in addition to those proposed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999). Hon and J. Grunig proposed a selective set of the most effective communication strategies for relationship outcomes. These strategies are derived from theories of interpersonal communication, conflict management, and negotiation. I developed the following research question in order to explore cultivation strategies:

RQ 6. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or find effective in developing a positive OPR?

Management and PR Practitioners' Perspectives

Visible leadership. As was briefly discussed in the results regarding climate, leadership presence emerged as a strategy that contributed to positive relationship building. Practitioners referred to this strategy as the "top-down approach," which is successful because community members are "hearing from the horse's mouth," as one practitioner put it. As a result, the community is reassured of the management's commitment to the relationship. To illustrate this point, most practitioners mentioned Jack Marburger's communication with the surrounding community during the crisis, with one manager saying:

> The biggest success was when Jack Marburger, the former director of the lab, said to our group that "I am the spokesperson. I am the one responsible for the laboratory. That's my role." The minute he said that, the weight of this lab's problems came off our shoulders and we were no longer the lightning rods. We could go out and do the strategic planning, recommend, advise, and guide.

She also emphasized that the presence of the key decision makers from the lab at community meetings is crucial and that directors and deputies should be sitting at the table with the community. She said, "If you don't have that, it ain't going to work."

A recent study conducted by Burson-Marsteller provided support for the findings on leadership communication. In 2001, Burson-Marsteller (Gaines-Ross, 2002, p. 19) surveyed 1,155 U.S. chief executives, senior managers, financial analysts, institutional investors, business media, and government officials. The study found that

the reputation of the CEO significantly contributes to how companies are perceived. The research found that CEO reputation influences investors' decisions to invest in a company (95%) and made them believe a company when it was under pressure from negative media coverage (94%). The CEO's reputation also helped investors maintain confidence in a company when its share price was lagging (92%). Furthermore, respondents were more likely to recommend a company as a good place to work (88%) if the CEO had a good reputation ("Building CEO Capital," 2002, p. 12).

In the study, the following five factors were suggested as critical in building a CEO's reputation ("Building CEO Capital," 2002, p. 12):

1. Being believable

2. Demanding high ethical standards

3. Communicating a clear vision inside the company

4. Maintaining a high quality top management team

5. Motivating and inspiring employees

Interestingly, financial performance was not noted as one of the most important factors for a CEO's reputation. However, as Gaines-Ross, the primary researcher of the study, explained, this is probably because "financial performance is often considered a given and a price of entry for CEO favorability" ("Building CEO Capital," p. 12). Burson-Marsteller's study pointed out the importance of the communication behaviors of CEOs as they lead an organization. The interview data in this study suggested that the mere presence of leadership represented a successful cultivation strategy.

Face-to-face communication. Face-to-face, one-on-one communication was considered vital in building a relationship with the community. The group communication setting of the CAC effectively personified the lab. Practitioners and top management found mediated communication vehicles such as print media or online communication limiting. In particular, public relations practitioners said that face-to-face communication made it possible to observe behavior, facial expressions, and vocal tonality.

At community meetings, the lab director tried to get a sense of the "community's collective emotional state." Practitioners were able to make meaningful connections with community members through face-to-face communication. The practitioners found that when the lab made a meaningful connection with someone, that person became more aware of the lab's activities and they "at least give a cursory look" to the lab's messages in the mass-media. One practitioner referred to this process as "putting a face on the lab."

Community council members' responses indicated that this strategy was having the desired effect. One council member told me, "Depending upon the issue and what's going on, you are going to have a different person each time; so I don't see the lab as necessarily 'they.'" Another member said that, when considering a certain project presented by the lab, she "can visualize the person's face." Face-to-face communication allowed the lab to dispel the mysteriousness of "the lab," and to eliminate past perceptions of it as an impersonal organization that created misunderstandings and speculations.

Openness. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) identified several key strategies for relationship building, including honesty and the open sharing of information and decisions with the community. The management and practitioners repeatedly emphasized these same strategies. The ALD of CEGPA said: "We do not convince the public, we do not sell the public. That has not been the reason why we have the programs we do. We involve them, we explain their decision space, and we are honest about it." Another manager explained the lab's strategy this way: "I am not saying that the community gets to steer the boat for us. I'm saying that they get to put their core values on the table and they are heard and respected. There is transparency."

Both managers stressed the importance of providing relevant information, whether good or bad, so the community could make its own judgments about the lab's decisions. In any case, engaging the community in the decision-making process was critical so that the community could be heard in all matters.

Listening. "Listening" was a term often mentioned by the CEGPA staff. The CEGPA ALD said that anger directed at the lab during the crisis was "not at the tritium, but the anger was at a lab that wouldn't listen and wouldn't engage. That was it!" She emphasized the importance of listening by saying:

> You know, if you are willing to listen, it's amazing what you can get. If you are willing to listen to people and try not to prejudge, and that's not always easy. It's easy with people you like or agree with most of the time. In fact, we've learned, I have personally learned, probably more from the activist community than I did from our friends. Because they would pick at your weaknesses. It took a long time for me to get to this point, but I [now] look at it

as feedback. This is not just a guidepost; it is a way for us to clean up our act to become more careful.

Another CEGPA community relations practitioner told me that "listening is 80%" of her job. CAC meetings were the main mechanism for listening, one in which different community groups are able to openly share their values and opinions.

Responsiveness. Timely response to community requests or potential issues was a key strategy for the lab's risk management. When asked to identify key communication strategies for effective community relations, one practitioner explained,

> [When] you are timely in providing the information and responsive to their [communities'] concerns, it doesn't mean that you have to agree with them, but you are responsive and you are acknowledging their issues and recognizing their value and telling them whether or not you've been able to incorporate their input, and if so, how you did it or didn't. If you do those things, you are going to do O.K..

Another practitioner described CAC meetings as a forum for being responsive: "So the CAC gives us feedback, and the end of that is that we have the responsibility to tell them how that feedback was used. To actually go back to the council and say this is what was done with it." She referred to this as "closing the loop." Practitioners' responses made it clear that they were consciously employing two-way models in their communication with the community.

Continued Dialogue/Patience. Based on their experience with the CAC, most of the management and public relations practitioners suggested "continued dialogue"

as an important cultivation strategy. "The biggest thing [for relationship management] is to continue the dialogues" with the community, a top manager stated. Some described continued dialogue as having "patience." Despite difficulties in the beginning, BNL and CAC learned to maintain open communication and, as a result, now have a mutually respectful relationship.

"We [the lab] knew if we started the CAC, it was going to be a long-term commitment," said one practitioner. Another practitioner explained: "It [a positive community relationship] doesn't happen right away. It is painful, it takes time, it is extremely expensive, but it is the right thing to do. You have to wait for the group to mature." The organization saw "investment of time" as a key strategy in their relationship building process. Employees spent significant time coordinating the 3- to 4-hour CAC meetings that were held after work. One top manager noted that the cost of community relations was "more in time than money." These managers all referred to a temporal aspect of the cultivation strategy that was not included in Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) theory.

Educational communication. Another key cultivation strategy for BNL involved educational communication. One manager explained, "It is not just giving them [community members] information [but] having them [community members] understand them [someone presenting information]." Most of the scientific research conducted at the lab is highly technical, and is not, therefore, easily understood by publics lacking a scientific background. One of the main tasks of the public relations division was to interpret the scientific process and its effects on the environment for community members. The lab director described this task as "putting things into

perspective" for the community. One of the major causes of the tritium crisis was a lack of educational communication, which led the community to perceive the lab as a mysterious and secretive place.

Networking. In Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) terms, the lab used a networking strategy to build relationships with various groups through the CAC forum. Furthermore, the lab not only provided an opportunity for the community to communicate about the lab's activities, but also to develop understanding among different interest groups within the community.

Development of the CAC was a wise strategy, one practitioner explained. Had the lab approached each community group separately to build a relationship, more manpower and time would have been expended. In this sense, the community council itself is an effective strategy for the lab to cultivate relationships with multiple publics at once.

Community Members' Perspectives

Access. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) also discussed access as an effective cultivation strategy that provides opinion leaders or members of publics access to public relations practitioners. When asked about effective cultivation strategies, most CAC members talked about access using the same terms as Hon and J. Grunig. Practitioners and management responded directly to telephone calls from council members, rather than delegating the collection of negative reactions or opinions to third parties.

"I know I can call people who work at the facility and I will get a response. They'll give me information that I want," a member told me. Another CAC member

said he knew the lab was "a phone call away" when he needed information. Current lab management has provided more access than in the past, one CAC member said.

At that time [under previous management], you have got to pull teeth to get the documentation. You know it exists, and you got to pull the teeth to get it or it's fallen to: "Well, it's in the admin record. Go to the library." O.K., so you are going to waste my time, with little kids at the time, I am going to take three little kids up to the public library and stand around, sit 30 minutes researching the administrative record to find the document we are all talking about, stand there, put 10 cents a copy, and so now I can make a copy and shove my kids back in my car and go home and take an hour or two hours, when you can send me a photocopy and send the stupid thing and mail it to me? Now you got me tested... now [after the management change] the documentation we get is, you come away with saying, I wonder if they left any stones unturned. They just gave me all this information.

Another member found that: "[In the past] if you wanted information, you could set [an] appointment and go on the lab site to use the library. But it [gaining access to information] was up to you to initiate. Now, the lab has initiated it by forming and hosting CAC."

Responsiveness. CAC members also regarded responsiveness as an effective strategy used by the lab. For most members, responsiveness meant that the lab would follow up on issues or requests made by community members. "They always call back," a member told me. "They are pretty responsive to comments," another member said when asked about the lab's most effective strategies.

"They [the lab employees] always ask 'what do you want,' 'what do you need,' 'what more information can we get for you,'" a member explained. She felt her community's concerns were "being heard and if it's at all possible they will scientifically or physically try to accommodate any concerns that the community may have." CAC members often discussed access and responsiveness together, suggesting the importance of direct communication from both sides.

Face-to-face communication. Community members also regarded interpersonal interaction as an effective cultivation strategy. One CAC member described why he thought interpersonal interaction was effective:

> People are more likely to believe when they have a one-on-one conversation with somebody and it maybe semi-officially, or it might be an informal phone call, might not be a part of a meeting, but that person becomes a human being, less of a representative or a part of a large organization. When you see them as a human being and you hear what they are saying, you tend to believe them more.

Another CAC member said having "people [community] come [to the lab] and speak one-on-one with people [at the lab]" is one reason the lab has been able to build positive relationships with the community. Since lab employees are present at CAC meetings, one member knows that when he has questions or issues to raise, "dialogue can be done right there [the CAC meeting]." As one member explained, interpersonal communication has helped by "giving a face" to the lab: "It is no longer 'the lab.' You need that personal attachment. Not only do I know about the project, but I can also visualize the person's face. You are taking away some of the scariness."

Educational communication/Knowledge. Management, public relations practitioners, and community members all regarded educational communication as a key strategy in the lab's efforts to build community relations. The complex scientific and technological nature of the lab's work requires careful translation for effective communication with community members who do not have a background in science.

"The community needs to know what's really going on with the lab," said one member, "So again, if they [the community] think it is a dark secretive place, they are not going to be feeling warm and fuzzy towards it." Knowledge begets trust, one member said: "The more people understand, the more they begin to know, the more they begin to trust." Another member felt "providing more knowledge" is important because the unknown is often a source of suspicion: "You can always have questions about what goes on in a lab, you know. You hear these stories about having nuclear types of reactors and so on and so forth. People might have questions about that."

"It is nothing more than education," one member described the communication between the lab and the CAC. A member with a scientific background said:

I looked at the CAC as waste of time [in the past] because it seemed like you are spending all this time and energy to bring a group of people, many who don't have background in science or in the cleanup of a superfund site, up to speed. You are educating them. So at times it is very frustrating because you get off track; you get questions that have been answered in the past. I am a little bit more familiar with a lot of these issues. On the other hand, I had seen, over the long term, a greatly increased level of communication between the community and the lab and so in the big picture I am not frustrated; but it's the

small picture that I am frustrated with. I think it has been tremendously

beneficial for the lab, and also for the community groups.

Respect. Community council members saw respect as a key to a good

communication strategy. They used words such as "sincerity" and "genuineness" to

describe it. The council members' description of respect matches what Hon and J.

Grunig (1999) call "assurance," a strategy in which a party "attempts to assure the

other parties that they and their concerns are legitimate" (p.15). For CAC members,

understanding the different communication styles of groups was another form of

respect displayed at CAC meetings. As one council member put it: "There are

different ways of communicating. You and I get the same end result, [but] it's just

different processes and mechanisms. If you can respect that, if you can be patient

about that, [you can work together]."

It is critical, therefore, that public relations practitioners and frontline

employees learn to communicate effectively and adapt their communication strategies

to each of their publics. Communication competence will be discussed in more detail

later.

Sharing of Tasks. Task-sharing was another cultivation strategy suggested by

Hon and J. Grunig (1999). In this strategy, organizations and publics solve common or

individual problems together. For example, the organization and/or the public interest

may be served by managing community issues, providing employment, making a

profit, and staying in business. The following anecdote, also discussed in previous

sections, demonstrates that the lab and community council members employed this

task-sharing strategy.

When the lab was under budgetary constraints to carry out an accelerated cleanup of a river in the community, council members lobbied for more money by writing letters to Congress and by placing stories in the media. Environmentalists wanted to achieve greater environmental safety and protection. Civic associations represented residents wishing for a clean environment around them. Political coalitions hoped to make elected officials accountable, and employees simply wanted to do the right thing. The groups' motivation to accelerate the river cleanup effort may not have been the same, but the result would serve all interests. As one CAC member put it, the lab and the community were both cognizant of the "utility of collaboration" to solve a collective problem.

Summary of RQ 6

The lab considered Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) openness, assurance, and networking strategies to be crucial in their work with the community. In addition, the lab emphasized its own temporal strategy, which entailed a patient, ongoing dialogue to cultivate a relationship with the community. Listening, responsiveness, and educational communication were factors critical to a successful community relations program at BNL. Visible leadership and face-to-face communication helped create a positive relationship with the community by personifying the lab. Community members agreed that the lab successfully employed community relations strategies to create positive relationships with the public.

Thus far, I have examined organizational foundation issues and relationship management practices at the case organization. In order to develop a normative model of the integrated management of internal and external relationships, I will now discuss

the role of employees in relationship management, and the links among EOR, EPR, and OPR.

Synergy Among Internal and External Relationships

At the outset of this research, I suggested the probability that employees who interact with publics have valuable knowledge and experience for understanding an organization's relationship building process. In order to explore this assumption, I studied the role employees played in building relationships with publics and focused on the theories that link employee loyalty with positive relationship building. I interviewed employees who volunteered in community outreach programs that provided opportunities for individual interactions between employees and the community. The lab initiated programs such as the Envoy Program, Summer Sundays, Volunteers in Partnership, and a Speaker's Bureau. The Envoy Program was a particularly appropriate arena in which to explore my theory because it used lab employees as ambassadors to their communities.

In the next section, I discuss the findings from my interviews with the envoys, volunteers for Summer Sundays, speakers, community members referred by envoys, and community members who participated in Summer Sundays. I also discuss findings from my participant observation of Summer Sundays.

Organizational Commitment

As Chen and Francesco (2003) observed, organizational commitment (OC) is a psychological state that "characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization." In the review of organizational commitment and loyalty literature, I pointed out the relevance of these concepts to the study of employee-to-organization

relationships. Specifically, I proposed that the more committed employees are to the organization, the more likely they are to contribute to the development of OPR. With the OC concept in mind, I developed the following research question to explore the quality of employee participants' relationships with the organization:

RQ 7. What types of organizational commitment do the employee participants have?

I asked employees a series of questions related to the OC measures suggested by Meyer and Allen (1991). I explored commitment levels by asking questions such as, "How long would you like to stay with the organization?"; "How much do you identify with the goals and mission of the lab?"; "Would you be willing to invest extra effort in your work for the organization?; and "How long would you like to maintain your membership with this organization?" Most individuals who participated in outreach programs said they were happy with their work at the lab. Common responses were, "I love what I do," "It is a great place to work," and, "It is an appealing place to work." One employee said: "Well, my wife says that 'He gets to do what he wants to and gets a paycheck for that.' I like doing what I'm doing most of the time."

Participants revealed their emotional attachment to the lab through stories of how devastated they were and how they pulled together, during the lab's environmental crises.

> What may be a big surprise to you is that the relations of the internal employee community were perhaps the best in the history of the lab during '97, the reason being there was so much attack from the outside the employees got

together. So you got scientists and union employees and secretaries all talking

together, coming together, and I would say there was an enormous positive

synergy internal to the lab.

According to this top manager, many concerned employees volunteered their efforts

for community outreach. Another employee shared the feelings she had during the

crisis:

I knew how hard the people in the _____ group worked. I knew that the

lab respected the environment and was not out there throwing chemicals out

the back door. A lot of people [external publics] just did not know. So it

actually hurt to work here as a very dedicated employee. As a result of that, I

was very willing to participate in a lot of the community meetings.

The affective commitment described by Meyer and Allen (1991) applied to

these employee volunteers. Meyer and Allen explained that employees with strong

affective commitment tend to align themselves with the goals and missions of the

organization, are willing to put extra effort into their work and want to stay with the

organization for the long-term. Indeed, employees who volunteered for community

outreach were willing to give the lab time outside of their normal work schedule.

When asked why they volunteer for community outreach programs, participants told

me they believed in what was being done at the lab. Although participants did not

recite the lab's mission verbatim, it was evident they were all aware of its goals.

The lab's mission statement states:

Brookhaven National Laboratory's mission is to produce excellent science and

advanced technology with the cooperation, support, and appropriate

involvement of its scientific and local communities. There are four

fundamental elements in the Laboratory's mission:

- To conceive, design, construct, and operate complex, leading edge,
  user-oriented facilities in response to the needs of the DOE and the
  international community of users.

- To carry out basic and applied research in long-term, high-risk
  programs at the frontier of science.

- To develop advanced technologies that address national needs and
  to transfer them to other organizations and to the commercial sector.

- To disseminate technical knowledge, to educate new generations of
  scientists and engineers, to maintain technical capabilities in the
  nation's workforce, and to encourage scientific awareness in the
  general public. (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.a.)

Not surprisingly, scientists strongly agreed with the mission of the lab. The

support staff was most interested in aiding the advancement of good science. "I

contribute to scientists' work by finding relevant information for them," one

participant said. Another employee said, "If I can provide papers to help Ray Davis[14]

getting a Nobel Prize, then I met my objective. I want to be a part of this." Employees

with science backgrounds felt much the same. One staff member with an educational

background in chemistry said he believes in "what this lab does, the science it

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[14]   Raymond Davis Jr., a chemist at Brookhaven National Laboratory, won the 2002 Nobel Prize
in Physics for detecting solar neutrinos, ghostlike particles produced in the nuclear reactions that power
the sun (Retrieved Feb 1, 2003, from http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/history/Nobel/Nobel_02.html).

conducts, technology they create, things they discover, and application of what they do."

Most employees interviewed hope to retire at the lab, indicating their desire to maintain a long-term relationship with the organization. A 2003 employee survey conducted by the lab revealed the longevity of employees at the lab. Twenty percent of employees (approximately 570)[15] stayed with the organization for more than 10 years. Fifteen percent of employees (approximately 430) worked at the organization for more than 20 years (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003b). This longevity was not too surprising since BNL is a research laboratory similar to a university setting.

Though less common than affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment coexisted with affective commitment at the lab. A primary reason for the continuance commitment displayed by several employees may have been the fact that the lab was one of the few major employers in its geographical region. One participant felt there were few better alternatives for her than the lab because her family was settled and did not wish to move from the area. Three employees who displayed normative commitment toward the organization had their own education or their children's education sponsored by the lab's programs. They shared a sense of obligation to the lab since it paid their educational expenses.

Summary of RQ 7

Results showed strong affective organizational commitment on the part of employees who volunteered in community outreach programs. Most participants were satisfied with their work, and hoped to maintain a long-term relationship with, and

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[15]   Total number of BNL employees was 2,887 as of 2003 (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003b).

retire from, the lab. They were willing to put in extra hours doing community outreach work, and took heart in the lab's mission and goals. Employees who received educational benefits for themselves or their children felt a sense of obligation to the lab, indicating normative commitment. However, the most common responses fit with what Meyer and Allen (1991) called affective commitment.

It is important to note that employee volunteers comprise only about 15% of all lab employees. As one employee told me: "You don't have a lot of people [employees] who take the time to do these kinds of things [community outreach activities]. I don't think it is a large fraction of the employees." I did not set out to study all lab employees, however, but chose participants according to their theoretical relevance. That is, I was specifically interested in those employees who volunteered for community outreach programs.

According to a CEGPA staff, there were about 400 employee volunteers in 2002. Most employee volunteers seemed to believe that a small number of people could make a difference. One employee said: "It is a small group of people [but] it migrates, it is like fungus, it is growing, you know. That's because these [envoys] are passionate people." In fact, based on the success of the Envoy Program, the lab launched Envoy Program 2; and new employees, referred by the original envoys or approached by the CEGPA staff, were recruited.

Employee-Organization Relationship (EOR) and Employee-Public Relationship (EPR)

The next step in this research was to determine how the employees' levels of commitment affected the way they interact and develop relationships with external publics. As was discussed in the conceptualization chapter, the OC researchers and the

loyalty researchers have demonstrated a positive statistical relationship between an employee's relationship with an organization and the attitude or behavior of external publics toward the organization. I wanted to explore how such a positive relationship between the two variables occurs. I was especially interested in the quality of employee-public interaction, the resulting employee-public relationships, and the impact of the relationships on the publics' overall view of the organization. Following are the research questions I used to explore this issue in detail.

RQ 8. How does the quality of the EOR affect the EPR building process?

I explored this research question by interviewing employees who volunteered in community outreach programs. One envoy explained that her satisfaction with work was projected to community members with whom she interacted.

Well, I can look at people who don't necessarily like their jobs; and I know that there is no way that they would ever want to give anything extra. If you are not happy with the way the lab is treating you [you won't volunteer for outreach programs]. I am satisfied with what I do, and I am happy to tell the community that, too.

"If you're not happy in what you're doing, you can't project that same image to the outside people. People will see through it very easily. You can't fake it," said another envoy when asked about his role. Another employee shared that he would not have been an envoy if he did not feel good about what was going on in the lab. "It is important that the person who is the envoy does feel good about the lab." Another envoy explained that one has to believe in the workplace in order to interact

confidently with the public. One employee volunteer described how her good internal relationships were projected to outsiders:

> I have good interaction with them [lab employees she knows], and I feel as though people [at the lab] respect me and I respect the lab. I think I bring that message to others [outside the lab]. If I am nasty, they [external publics] are not only going to think not highly of me, but [they would think] also, "What kind of a company would hire that kind of person?"

Most employee volunteers believed that external publics could easily read the employees' level of satisfaction with the lab during their interactions. Therefore, they treated publics the same way they are treated at the lab.

However, one envoy said she did not think the quality of her relationship with the lab affected the way she interacted with the community.

> I have a neutral view of the place. Personally, this is not my dream career. I stayed here because it is a good enough place to work. I just think that the accusations that were made against us, and the facts behind what happened with the tritium, [was] just ridiculous. So, it [volunteering for community outreach] had to do more with what was the right thing to do for me.

She added that, although she did not have a good working relationship with the former department head during the crisis, her willingness to go out into the community and explain what the lab stands for was unaffected. She understood her relationship with the lab as separate from her relationship with the individuals with whom she works. Responses from most employees, however, confirmed that their level of commitment toward the lab *would* affect their willingness to participate in community outreach

programs. Most envoys also said they believed that their positive relationship with the lab would be projected in their interaction with members of the community.

Dual Commitment

Many envoys made clear that they were not only volunteering for the lab's sake. Employees often said they see themselves as a part of the surrounding community and were motivated to participate in outreach as a result of their commitment to their communities. According to a fact sheet published by the human resources department, most of the employees live within a 30-mile radius of the lab (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.f.). Several envoys mentioned the importance of maintaining personal integrity within their own community. One envoy told me:

> I am continued to be viewed as a trustworthy, thoughtful person who is motivated by the right things within the community. And if I thought the lab was wrong or negligent, I mean my credibility with people in the community is very important, you know. So I am not so "company man," so to speak, that I would not be truthful with my friends or neighbors.

Another envoy explained that maintaining his reputation as a credible person within his community was important to him. He said: "It's the reputation that I carry with me. It is integrity, I have lots of credibility, and that's what I think I bring to the table [for the community]." Another employee was an envoy to her sons' high school and her church. She explained how she relates to her community: "You are a part of the community and why would you say something that is not truthful? You are sitting with other parents. You are involved with people who have kids who play with your

kids or whatever." Most envoys did not separate themselves from the external

community. Another employee volunteer said:

> The bottom line is that we are them. I know that there isn't an "us" and "the
>
> community." So when you have relationships with people in the neighborhood,
>
> and they know that you're an honest person, and under no circumstances are
>
> you going to tell your child's friend's mother a lie to protect your company.

Clearly, employee volunteers had a dual sense of commitment, both to the lab and to

their communities. An envoy said: "I think it [the Envoy Program] facilitates two

ideals I have. I want people [within her community] to feel comfortable [about the lab]

and, you know, I want to help the lab."

In the envoys' view, the lab benefited from their participation in community

outreach programs because the envoys brought positive relationships into the lab. One

envoy described it in the following way:

> It is not like employees all of a sudden got religion and ran off and joined these
>
> groups. It was that the lab got religion and found the employees who belong to
>
> groups. Because we are a part of the community, it was very natural to find us
>
> and use us.

Another envoy thought that "the lab has gained a lot from [envoys] being out there."

Many employees believed the Envoy Program played a valuable role during

the crisis. One envoy recalled:

> [The lab director] being out there and answering questions, that helped. But if
>
> we didn't have that presence in the community as individuals, it would have
>
> been rough. Especially, people don't trust the government. There has been a

whole history you know. [The community used to think] secretive things were coming out [of the lab]. I don't think we could have [overcome] the crisis without getting employees who community members trusted out there.

In general, employees viewed themselves not as promotional message carriers, but as facilitators of understanding between the organization and the community. "I see myself more as a mediator. I can bring messages in both directions," an envoy told me. Another envoy explained, "The Envoy Program is trying to put a pulse on the community; how are they feeling now, what effects are being made, and trying to get out more information so that people understand what's done here." Another envoy explained: "My role is to go into the community and tell the people the fact[s] that we know. When we find out there are rumors or concerns among people, we are not going to solve the problem, but we are supposed to contact [the CI coordinator]."

In OC and loyalty research, scholars focus on ways to increase employee commitment to the organization, and how such commitment can be used to enhance organizational goals. Similarly, public relations professionals work to find the best ways to communicate organizational messages through their public relations programs. The Envoy Program, however, was not a promotional tool, but a form of symmetrical communication whereby the organization listened to public opinion. Furthermore, this program did not merely use the employees to promote the lab. It also respected the importance of the employees' dual commitment to the organization and the community.

In turn, the envoys developed a sense of satisfaction by not only helping the lab's goals and missions, but also by providing service to their own communities. I

wanted to know more about whether employees thought the Envoy Program was effective and asked why they thought the program worked. Following, I discuss success factors identified by the envoys and relevant responses from community members who interacted with the envoys.

Interpersonal Communication/Informality

"What I like about it [the Envoy Program] is that [I am within] my natural environment," one envoy explained. For envoys, interaction with community members usually took place in everyday life settings, such as school PTA meetings, church, children's sports, local dance groups, local taxpayers' associations, property owners' associations, rotary clubs, and professional societies. Another envoy said the program was effective in part because it was not a grandiose plan. He explained that because envoys were not asked to go into to the community representing the lab and were not pressured to promote the lab, the program became the "fun stuff" for him.

Employees viewed the informal structure of the Envoy Program as its greatest strength. One envoy referred to his interactions with community members as "a purely personal, off-the-cuff, spur-of-the-moment interaction with somebody asking and talking about the lab, or reactions about the lab." Another envoy referred to it as a "grassroots type of thing" and an "informal" program. He explained that the program was about "[Bobby] talking to [Sam] and saying, '[Sam], what's going on up there?'"

An illustrative story told by an envoy provided further insight into the potential of these informal communication settings. The envoy had been on a sports club team with an elected official of his community.

He [the elected official] comes up to me one day and says: "What are you doing up there? What kind of nuclear bombs do you have?" Here is an elected official, talking to me and asking me these questions. I said, "How about you coming to the lab and I'll introduce you to Community Involvement and people who are doing the science?" So he came. After that tour, he said: 'Thank you very much. I [now better] understand [what you do out here]." By him coming here and talking person to person with senior-level management on any concerns he had, [we were able to] defuse any concerns that he had. So now what we did was to have somebody high in the pyramid [understand the lab], and [he] can diffuse issues before it came down to the public.

Two community members shared similar experiences of the ripple effect of their interaction with the envoys. A community member who was involved in several environmental groups said she shared her experience with the lab's envoy with those groups. Another member told me she was involved in various civic groups in the community, and she, too, shared information she gathered from the envoy with the civic groups. She was also able to compare the lab's communication practices with other organizations with which she deals. She has found that the lab's community programs are "very good to excellent" compared with those of other organizations.

The informal nature of the program facilitated communication with community members who tend to be timid or embarrassed in public settings. According to an envoy, the Envoy Program allowed people to ask questions and receive answers in a more calm and comfortable way than in public settings. A community member who interacts with an envoy felt the non-threatening nature of the interaction allowed her to

listen better to what the envoy had to say about the lab. She told me that she "would not have done that through a newspaper ad."

Overall, the interview data showed that an interpersonal communication program that taps into everyday life settings is a powerful tool for risk communication. Consequently, it is important to have committed employees who are willing to embrace the role of facilitator between the organization and the public. In addition to the traditional, mediated channels of communication, organizations should focus on the potential impact informal, interpersonal communication can have on strategic communication management.

Educational Value/Building of Internal Communities

My interviews with the envoys revealed an unexpected finding: Although the program was designed for external relationship building, it also had a positive effect on the development of internal relationships. Several envoys explained how the program taught them more about other departments in the laboratory and caused them to develop relationships with other employees at the lab. One envoy said: "There are so many things which we learn from the monthly meetings. [I learn about] things that are going on here [in the lab] and the application of that basic research, and that's helpful." Another envoy told me that as a result of participating in the program, "you will know more than others, so that makes me feel special." "Part of being in the program has given me an overview of the work that's being done here and that helps me," said another envoy.

"A lot of departments and divisions around here are like systems. You don't leave your little enclave. So this is a great way, number one, for [employees] to meet

the scientist who's doing the work we all support and, two to see the world outside [a] particular division," another envoy told me. In other words, the Envoy Program was an educational forum that helped employees from different departments develop relationships with one another, expanding their social network.

One envoy pointed out that his network of relationships within the lab helped him provide answers to questions from the community because he did not have to spend time searching for answers on his own. Another envoy described this network as "everybody complimenting each other; everybody crossing each other's strands and you make this nice network of communication fibers within the lab, and it goes out of the lab." In this way, the Envoy Program at BNL, though intended for external communication, also contributed to the development of an internal community. Initially, I thought that symmetrical, internal communication systems, not external communication systems, would contribute to development of positive EOR. However, my findings suggested otherwise.

Empowerment through Involvement

In addition to helping the lab as facilitators, envoys enjoyed the chance to talk about the lab as a group at the envoy meetings. "You feel good when you are invited to talk," one envoy told me. Another envoy felt his "ego being fed" since "the lab will listen to you." "It is morale boosting because it's like I have more purpose in what I'm doing in my job," another envoy said. Envoys felt their voices were being heard by the organization during envoy meetings.

In addition, employees brought public opinions to the lab, which helped the lab learn how to improve. Employees found helping the lab in this way to be fulfilling.

They were empowered by participating in a process that helped the organization make better decisions. They were also contributing to their own communities by ensuring their communities' voice was heard at the lab. In this sense, the Envoy Program made it possible for the lab to simultaneously build positive relationships with both internal and external publics.

Summary of RQ 8

Most employees who participated in this study believed that the quality of their relationship with the organization does affect their willingness to interact with external publics. Employees also believed that the quality of their relationship with the lab would be projected in their interaction with the publics. However, employees said they were not volunteering their efforts for the sake of the lab only; employees were also motivated by their commitment to their communities.

In the Envoy Program, the employees played an active role by collecting public opinions, rather than passively relaying promotional messages to the public. Employees believed their role was meaningful in that it not only helped the organization make better decisions, but also provided the community with opportunities for their voices to be heard. Participants felt the informal and interpersonal nature of the Envoy Program contributed to its success. The interview data showed that reaching the publics in their natural, everyday environment, through contact with individual employees, was an effective way to connect with the community.

Unexpectedly, employees found educational value in the external community outreach programs. They liked knowing more about what was going on in the lab, and

consequently they gained a better understanding of their own place and role within the organization. I found that the community outreach program also provided opportunities for lab employees to build a stronger, internal community. Overall, employee participation in external communication programs fostered positive internal and external relationships.

Communication Competence: Use of Symmetrical Cultivation Strategies

In the conceptualization chapter, I proposed that the concept of communication competence was relevant to this study. The suggestion was that those employees who interact with external publics and build positive relationships would have certain personal communication characteristics. In this study, I conceptualized employee communication competence as the knowledge and ability to use symmetrical cultivation strategies. I developed the following research question to discern the communication competence of employees:

RQ 9. What types of cultivation strategies do the participants use, see as important, or find effective in developing a positive EPR?

I interviewed both envoys and the community members with whom they interacted. Cultivation strategies used by individual envoys did not differ greatly from those used by the public relations practitioners in their CAC meetings. I first asked the envoys about their communication styles and then which communication strategies they thought were effective in building positive relationships with community members.

Openness

When asked which communication strategies were most effective with external publics, envoys first mentioned openness and honesty.

One of the biggest things is you need to tell them the good and the bad. I think it's nice to go there [to her community group] and always have a good message, but I don't think that's very honest. I had a few stumbling blocks with that, to be honest. We had this deer radiation and maybe I should have tried to avoid the issue but that's not acceptable to me, because I have relationships with these people, and I am not going to stand up there and not acknowledge a deer [affected by radiation] was found. Someone needs to either give me information or tell me whom the person is that they [community members] can call. I am not going to stand there and act like there is nothing going on, you know. I don't think it was a big deal, but it becomes a bigger deal if you are not up-front.

The envoys also mentioned admitting mistakes and that it was important to "admit where the fault was," as one envoy told me. He added, "Once they [community members] hear that [your openness], then they think they can trust you more, be more open." Another envoy said that her community members know she would not tell a lie. Another envoy told me that "truth" is the number one priority in communicating with community members.

Community members I interviewed noted the openness and honesty of the envoys: "She [envoy] will be upfront and tell me the truth. She is not going to dance around the corner. She is very straightforward." "I have grown to trust her and her

word," another said. Clearly, the openness and honesty of envoys contributed to a high level of trust among community members.

Access

The envoys considered their main role as providing the community with access to relevant information. In accordance with the role description found in the Envoy Program implementation plan (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.f.), envoys often described themselves as a "facilitator," "liaison," or "mediator" who provides community members with access to the lab.

Community members are reassured because they know who to contact when they have issues or questions about the lab. "[Envoy name] is there [at her community meetings] monthly to give updates to people about the lab," one community member explained. "When the lab had environmental issues, I had asked [envoy name] to explain it to me. I wanted to better educate myself about the issue. It was helpful. When you know someone you can trust, you can go and ask them," another member told me. "Whenever you raise the question with him [envoy], he will follow through," another said.

Aside from access to information, envoys also provided access to lab resources. One community member described his experience with an envoy as an impressive event. With the help of an envoy, a local Boy Scout troop, of which he was a leader, was given access to lab facilities so the scouts could conduct their merit badge science projects. "I was very impressed in [how] the staff treated us," he explained. "They were very helpful; they were very respectful; and knowing the fact that these people

come in their own time to help our kid was really an eye opener." He told me that he

sensed a "genuine feeling of support, interest, and respect."

> Another member described how he was able to invite a speaker to his school.
>
> He [the envoy] was instrumental in introducing us and I don't have the
>
> person's name in front of me, but introduced to the person who did all the
>
> research on the brain, and the effects of the drugs in the brain, and that person,
>
> in fact, did the presentation in the past year [at our school]. I don't know
>
> whether we would have had that kind of, I think we probably could have gotten
>
> the information other than from [the envoy], but he was the first contact on that.

The envoys made it possible for the lab to become a valuable resource for the

surrounding communities, and facilitated the development of mutually beneficial

relationship between the organization and the public.

Responsiveness

Just as in CAC interviews, community members mentioned responsiveness

when they discussed access. Whenever there were questions about the lab, community

members could rely on the envoys to get back to them with answers. If the envoy did

not know the answers, she or he referred them to the right person at the lab. A

community member said:

> We [his community] like to have [a] person like [the envoy's name] who is
>
> willing to say, "Well, I don't know, but I know who to go ask, and I'll find out,
>
> and I'll get back to you on Monday," and then she follows through and she
>
> does get back to you Monday. That kind of thing builds confidence.

Similarly, when another community member's group had a question about the lab, she knew she could go to the envoy and the envoy would "come back with answers." Community members' responses suggested that, for access to be an effective communication and information-sharing strategy, it must be paired with responsiveness.

Listening

Envoys responded in a way that was similar to the public relations practitioners' responses on strategies used at CAC. Most envoys also said that listening to the other side's viewpoints was an important part of their role. Particularly during the tritium crises, listening was crucial to envoys as they carried out their role as the ears of the lab.

When asked about effective communication styles, an envoy told me:

The other part of it is listening skills, and I think I am not assuming that [the community member] ha[s] all the information. Even if you [think you] are correct, knowing how to not communicate that in an arrogant way or without putting the other people down [is important]…respecting their questions, their fears, and allowing them, understanding that whatever they are feeling even if it doesn't make sense to you, it's valid for them.

For this envoy, listening also meant showing respect for community members.

In fact, the Envoy Program implementation plan (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.g.) also states that envoys should be "A good listener" and "objective listeners to the community's concerns about the Lab" (p. 2). In a way that was consistent with the description found in the plan, one envoy explained her role as

letting the lab get "the gossip [within the community] as it were." Another envoy said,

"If the person [community member] has a concern, worry, or just a question, I bring

that back to our [envoy] meetings." Another described envoys as "the extension of the

lab's ears…and bringing concerns the communities back [into the lab]."

Respect

Envoys said they found that respecting other's viewpoints was important. This

strategy is similar to what Hon and J. Grunig (1999) referred to as assurance. Showing

respect for community members also involved adjusting to the different

communication styles of community members. An envoy told me:

> Some people do want, first and foremost, an emotional response from me, as in
>
> "Trust me Mary, I wouldn't work here if it were such a horrible place." Some
>
> people just wouldn't buy that. They want the facts. So I try very hard to
>
> respond by giving the information [according to the] receiving style of the
>
> person. So it's very, very specific information; so I try to tailor it accordingly.
>
> So there's not a one way that works.

A community member shared a relevant experience with a public relations

manager:

> You're very lucky when you're involved in a process and you have certain key
>
> managers, or certain key individuals, that are the ones that work to understand
>
> the other group's individual way of communication. You don't need everybody
>
> involved in the process to be those key people. [Manager name], she listened
>
> and she got a better idea of how the advocacy and activist world work, and the
>
> way that our mindsets are.

This community member emphasized the significance of an organizational

representative who can respect and understand the varied communication styles of the

community groups.

Community members appreciated the fact that the envoys translated scientific

topics into lay terms for them. As one said, "They are able to talk to us, not down to

people, but with the people, and I think that is important. Because sometimes people

have enough trouble with scientists. 'Oh they are talking. I don't understand a word

they are saying!' and so having the [envoy] liaison thing is so good."

Summary of RQ 9

The effective cultivation strategies used by individual envoys were similar to

strategies used in group communication settings, such as the CAC meetings. I found

that employees who participated in the Envoy Program were competent

communicators who used symmetrical cultivation strategies. Cultivation strategies

such as openness, access, responsiveness, listening, and respect contributed to the

development of positive relationships between envoys and community members. As J.

Grunig (1992b) maintained, interpersonal communication facilitated use of

symmetrical strategies. In the following section, I discuss the quality of interaction and

how the resulting relationship between the employees and publics affected the quality

of OPR.

 Employee-Public Relationships (EPR) and Organization-Public Relationships (OPR)

In this study, I assumed that publics are more likely to develop constructive

relationships with employees and have a positive view of the organization when they

have positive interactions with employees. To explore this assumption, I developed the following research question.

RQ 10. How does the quality of EPR affect the public's evaluation of the organization?

I interviewed community members who came in contact with each other through community outreach programs. In particular, I focused on the Envoy Program since it was specifically designed to encourage regular interaction between employees and community members.

I found that community members who interacted with an individual employee through the Envoy Program often considered themselves as having personal relationships with the envoy. Overall, community members used their experience and relationship with the envoys as a frame of reference when evaluating the lab.

Envoys as Credible Reference

Community members who interacted with envoys explained that the relationships they had with individual envoys formed a basis for their cursory evaluation of the lab. A community member who had negative opinions about the lab in the past said her relationship with the envoy changed the way she thought about the lab: "Because I feel he [envoy] has a good judgment, that automatically changes some of my perceptions about the lab." Another community member said, "When it is somebody that [community members] know, [someone] they trust and understand, [then] that person emulates the lab…and they feel 'Oh, well gee, the lab can't be that bad if these great people work there.'" Another community member said that "if it weren't for [the envoy], I would probably be far more negative about the lab." Still

another community member said, "I mean, my impression of the lab changed because of my associations [with the lab employees]."

Community members' responses indicated that they trusted envoys more when envoys were viewed as friends and neighbors, rather than as representatives of the organization. "[Envoy name] is my friend," a member told me. Another member further illustrated this point: "Rather than bringing down someone with high title from outside, the local person [envoy] makes a different impact if they are addressing the [community]. I think they can relate on a local level and local concerns." She added that envoys put a "personal face to the large organization." Another member said that her community organization considered the envoy part of their organization: "I think they kind of adopt whoever the liaison is. They come to all the parties and whatever; it is like a part of the family. [Envoy name] is like a part of the family. They adopted her." The interview data suggested that developing positive personal relationships with the envoys made the envoys' evaluation of, or information about, the lab credible to community members.

Skepticism toward Mass Media

An interesting theme found in interviews with community members was their skepticism about what they see or hear in the mass media. "I don't know if I trust the press," a community member told me while explaining the value of having an envoy as a source of information. She explained that, because she trusts the envoy, she does not put "too much stake into rumor and to what I hear from the media." She said she would go to an envoy for information before making a judgment on a particular issue. Another community member also tended to be "a little cautious and not too hasty in

making judgments" about messages she got from the media. She told me that the press can be "misguided" and that she tries to get all the facts before making judgments.

One woman said she felt "newspapers just want to sell papers" by covering sensational topics. After reading a report on water contamination in her neighborhood, she went to one of the envoys for further information on the issue. In this way, she was able to gather more information about the issue and understand the lab's position on it.

However, community members also exercised constructive skepticism toward the lab, even when they had positive relationships with the envoys. As one community member put, the positive relationship he has with an envoy "doesn't make [him] love the lab," but it does help him give the lab the benefit of the doubt. Another member's relationship with her envoy does not always affect her views about the lab. She said, "I kind of make up my own mind about things." She does not take what the envoys tell her to be the whole truth either but looks to other sources for verification: "I can see several sides of all things. I have checked out what they have said as well, just to make sure I have all sides. I also talk to other environmental groups as well." However, she added that the envoy "never misguided" her and thought the lab was being "open enough" that she could trust it.

Overall, the envoys were viewed by community members as credible sources of information. This made it possible for community members to gather balanced information about issues or problems related to the lab. Hence, the envoys made it possible for the lab to counteract any negative bias in mass media coverage.

Interview data suggested that when community members developed trusting, personal relationships with envoys, the envoys represented a credible reference point

to evaluate the lab and lab-related issues. Therefore, organizations must develop positive relationships with their employees in preparation for the development of good OPR. As a result, employees will act as effective reference points for the publics they encounter.

Summer Sundays as an Initial Forum for OPR

Summer Sundays presented an opportunity for community members to interact with lab employees. The program consisted of a tour of lab facilities, presentations, and exhibitions, all designed to provide community members access to scientific knowledge. In this way, the Summer Sundays program was an educational communication strategy.

Most community members brought their families to the Summer Sunday event I attended. A number of senior citizens also came to the program. An employee volunteer I interviewed at the event confirmed that the two major groups who attend the events are parents with children and senior citizens. The community profile identified through secondary data from the Census indicated that Suffolk County is a family-oriented region (in 2000, 62% of the population were married couples with a family; and 31% had children under 18). There is also a significant senior population (senior citizens over 65 comprised 12% of total population in 2000) residing within the area.

According to the coordinator of Summer Sundays, the lab seldom built on-going relationships with individuals or groups from the community through this event. However, a community opinion survey revealed that those who visited BNL during

events such as the Summer Sundays are more informed about the lab and tend to have a positive attitude toward BNL (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2001).

I heard similar opinions from visitors I interviewed at the event. A financial advisor who came to the event with his son told me, "Being here experiencing it gives you, you come to know that something good is happening here." A dental assistant, attending with his children, said coming to the event helps him understand what BNL does, "it gives [him] a different perspective," and it has a positive effect on his feelings about the lab. He explained that seeing the scientists, who looked like normal people, helped him feel closer to the lab. A retiree told me that, "People paying taxes want to see that they get results." Coming to the event helped him understand what the lab does with his tax dollars.

Several community members found that the Summer Sundays provided educational entertainment. A mother who brought her two children to the event said, "It is a nice, free way to spend a Sunday afternoon." Most parents regarded this event as an interesting learning experience for their children. Several children I talked with described the science programs provided by the lab as "fun" and "cool." The most popular program was the Whizbang Show, a hands-on science show designed for young children. Summer Sundays allowed the lab to reach out to community members by providing educational programs to their children.

According to Sha and Meyer (2002), when children are used as vehicles for communication in public relations programs, educating the children is not the sole objective of the programs. The hope is that the children will also bring the message home to their parents and family members. BNL's Summer Sundays events are one

such public relations effort. A community member, who was also an educator, shared an opinion that supported Sha and Meyer's theory. He said that the more the lab reached out to students through schools or educational events, the more students are going to "report to their own parents and their families about what goes on at the lab, and the kind of things they learned about."

Several CAC and non-CAC members mentioned the Summer Sundays program during my interviews with them. As one person said, "They have been quite open with us for a number of years, invited us up there more, they started a regular Sunday thing." As this member's response shows, the Summer Sundays program symbolically represented the lab's openness toward the community.

Although the events may not have led to the development of on-going relationships with certain community groups, Summer Sundays were opportunities for community members and the lab to share positive experiences. These personal experiences provided at least an awareness of what the lab does, and established a foundation on which an on-going relationship might be built.

Summary of RQ 10

The findings suggested that when community members developed positive, individual relationships with lab employees, they used their relationship as a credible reference by which to evaluate the organization. For instance, community members were skeptical of the mass media messages they receive and considered the credibility of their envoys to make a balanced judgment. However, community members also exercised constructive skepticism toward the overall organization by cross-checking information against other sources available to them.

Nevertheless, I found that, when faced with negative information about the lab, community members were likely to give the benefit of the doubt to the lab if they had a positive relationship with the envoys. This inferred that developing positive EOR with employees is critical for an organization to build positive OPR, as employees become influential reference points by which publics can evaluate the organization.

Open house events such as Summer Sundays, though not a forum for long-term relationship building, allowed community members to personally experience the lab. These hands-on experiences made it possible for community members to develop an awareness of the lab and its activities. Educational entertainment programs at the event effectively engaged both children and their parents in the lab's scientific activities.

Conclusion

In the previous section, I discussed, in detail, the findings related to each research question developed at the outset of the study. The excellence study and the organizational climate theory offered a framework for the first three research questions, and they provided further understanding of organizational structure and context.

Research questions 4 through 6 were developed to explore how relationship theories played out in a real-life setting. Specifically, I explored the concept of OPR from both the organization and publics' point of view. I then examined the quality of the relationship between the lab and the community. Finally, I studied the organization and the community's points of view on effective cultivation strategies. Research questions 7 through 10 explored the associations among EOR, EPR, and OPR.

According to Wolcott (2002), in the analysis phase, a researcher "follows standard procedure to observe, measure, and communicating with others about the nature of what is 'there'" (p. 33). However, I have also provided some interpretation by discussing the findings of each research question. My interpretations will continue as I next discuss propositions of this study.

CHAPTER VI: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to develop a normative theory of integrated internal and external relationship management. After reviewing relevant literature in various fields, I developed a theoretical framework for the study. I focused on an exploration of three key concepts: employee-organization relationships (EOR), employee-public relationships (EPR), and organization-public relationships (OPR). In the previous chapter, I discussed the findings of my research questions in detail. I used the data collected and analyzed in this study to accomplish my goal of developing a normative theory.

Before I move forward, however, several significant findings should be mentioned. First, I found that external public relations programs can contribute to the development of positive EOR. Initially, I focused only on internal communication systems to explore positive EOR. However, I found that employee participants in this study also developed positive EOR through their participation in external outreach programs. Furthermore, I found that employees who participated in the external programs were empowered by their experience.

Secondly, I found that employees were motivated to participate in community outreach not only because of their commitment to the organization but also because of their commitment to their communities. The commitment was strengthened as a result of the personal relationships that developed between the employees and the publics who frequently interacted with one other.

Thirdly, I identified several cultivation strategies, such as visible leadership, continued dialogue/patience, and educational communication, which were not

included in Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) theory. Finally, I identified factors that influenced the participants' subjective perceptions of OPR. Those factors included the publics' level of involvement, their level of participation in community relations programs, and the frequency of communication with the organization.

This section begins with an overview of major findings, and discusses each proposition made to develop my normative theory. I will then discuss the implications of this study for the theory and practice of public relations, the limitations of the current study, and directions for future research.

Summary of Major Findings

I organized major findings of the study according to the theoretical framework developed in the conceptualization chapter. The excellence and climate theory, relationship management theory, and the employee-public-organization linkage theory are the three pillars of the theoretical framework. First, I attempted to identify the organizational foundations necessary for public relations to enact its role in the integrative management of internal and external relationships. The excellence and climate theory provided guidance in this regard. Secondly, I attempted to further explore and expand upon the relationship management theories at work in the case organization. Thirdly, based on the theoretical framework of the linkage research, I attempted to examine the interconnectedness of EOR, EPR, and OPR. Figure 3 summarizes the major findings.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings

Research Question	Findings
1. Structure of PR department & PR behavior	• BNL's public relations directorate was empowered by its dominant coalition.
	• BNL's public relations directorate was an integrated communication management function.
	• A mixture of communication models was used in BNL's external communication programs. However, programs displayed more symmetrical characteristics than asymmetrical. BNL followed deontological as well as utilitarian rules of ethics.
2. Internal communication system	• BNL's internal communication systems had symmetrical characteristics. In general, employees felt little need to refrain from expressing their concerns to their supervisors.
	• Public relation's role was limited to editorial function in employee communication.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
3. Climate for relationship building	Climate that emphasizes positive relationship building with the external community was evidenced by:
	• The lab's organizational practice/procedures: visible leadership, community involvement training procedures, allowance of time or paid time, and departmental support for community outreach.
	• Institutional/personal rewards: free luncheons, plaques, and personal gratification.
	Division between the scientists and operational staff: need for development of internal community identified.
	• Few concrete organizational practices, procedures, or reward systems addressing the perceived division among employees.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
4. Subjective perceptions of OPR	OPR is an appropriate concept when:
	• An organization and its publics have behavioral consequences on each other.
	• Community members were involved in lab-related issues, actively sought information, and participated in community outreach programs.
	• Repeated interaction between the organization and the community was in place.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
5a & 5b. Quality of relationships	• Both parties raised trust as a critical issue for a quality relationship. Both parties thought the level of trust had significantly improved since the crisis.
	• Both parties recognized the community members' limited level of control mutuality.
	• Both parties perceived a high level of commitment from the organization in community relationship building.
	• Both sides were relatively satisfied with the current relationship compared to the relationship during the crisis.
	• For participants of this study, a mutually beneficial relationship with an organization could be described as a symbiotic relationship (Hung, 2003), in which both parties recognize interdependence, and work together for a common good.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
6. Effective cultivation strategies for OPR	• Visible leadership: The leadership has physical presence at community meetings and other community outreach efforts. The leaders communicate directly with the community when necessary.
	• Face-to-face communication: Interpersonal communication 'personifies' the lab.
	• Listening/responsiveness: Community opinions are brought into the organization and the organization responds in a timely fashion.
	• Continued dialogue/patience: A long-term vision and persistence is necessary in communicating with publics.
	• Educational communication: Appropriate interpretation and education of scientific knowledge is crucial.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
7. Employees' organizational commitment	Affective commitment of participating employees was evidenced by their: • High satisfaction with work. • Identification with the organization's mission and goals. • Desire to maintain long-term relationship with the lab. • Willingness to exert extra efforts in community outreach.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
8. EOR and EPR	• Employees believed their quality of EOR affected their interaction with the external publics.
	• Employees who had positive EOR volunteered their efforts out of a dual commitment to the organization and their communities.
	• The Envoy Program enhanced the quality of EOR: the external program served as an educational forum for employees and as a forum for development of internal relationships.
	• The informal and interpersonal nature of the Envoy Program made it easy to implement symmetrical communication strategies.

Figure 3.

Summary of Major Findings (cont'd)

Research Question	Findings
9. Communication competency	• Employees who participated in the Envoy Program were communicatively competent: they used symmetrical cultivation strategies such as openness, access, responsiveness, listening, and respect.
10. EPR and OPR	• Community members had positive, individual relationships with the envoys. • Envoys became credible references for community members who had positive EPR, in their evaluation of the lab or lab-related issues.

Public Relations Excellence: Foundational Issues

I found that the case organization followed many of the principles outlined by the excellence theory. Specifically, the organization's public relations was: 1) empowered by its dominant coalition, 2) an integrated management function, 3) following more symmetrical than asymmetrical principles in their internal and external communication, and 4) responsible for a climate in which positive relationship building with the external publics was evident in the lab's practice, procedures, and rewards. However, for internal relationship building, I discovered employees perceived a division between the scientists and the support staff. This indicated the need for further development of internal communication programs that could foster a climate for positive relationship development among the employees.

Relationship Management in Practice

The case study demonstrated how an organization and its publics can engage in the relationship building process through public relations activities. I found that, concurrent with Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) theory, the participants felt OPR occurred when an organization and its publics had behavioral consequences on one another. However, several factors influenced community members' subjective perception of OPR. OPR was a relevant concept when community members were 1) involved in lab-related issues and actively sought information, 2) participated in community outreach programs, and 3) had repeated interaction with the organization.

Figure 4.

Effective Cultivation Strategies for OPR

	Management & PR Practitioners	Community Members
Newly Identified	Visible Leadership	
	Face-to-face Communication	Face-to-face Communication
	Listening	
	Responsiveness	Responsiveness
	Continued Dialogue/Patience	
	Educational Communication	Educational Communication
Hon and J. Grunig (1999)	Openness	Access
	Networking	Respect (Assurance)
		Sharing of Tasks

In this case study, interviews with both parties revealed that the organization and the publics had similar views on the quality of their relationship as both parties 1) acknowledged that the level of trust has significantly improved compared to the past, 2) recognized the community members' limited level of control mutuality, 3) perceived a high level of commitment from the organization in community relationship building, and 4) were relatively satisfied with the current relationship. Participants of this study defined a mutually beneficial relationship with an organization as what Hung (2003) described as a symbiotic relationship, one in which both parties realize their interdependence and work together for a common good. In this study, both the organization and the community considered symmetrical

cultivation strategies effective for the development of positive OPR. New cultivation strategies were also identified, including: 1) visible leadership, 2) face-to-face communication, 3) listening, 4) responsiveness, 4) continued dialogue/patience, and 5) educational communication. Figure 4 summarizes the findings on cultivation strategies.

Synergy Among Internal and External Relationships

As the linkage research suggested, this study found that employees who displayed affective commitment to the organization facilitated the development of positive OPR by participating in external communication programs. These employees were communicatively competent and used symmetrical cultivation strategies, including openness, access, responsiveness, listening, and respect. The interpersonal nature of the Envoy Program facilitated employees' use of symmetrical strategies.

This study showed that the public relations function identified the intersection of internal and external publics, which contributed to the simultaneous development of internal and external communities. I found that the external communication program also served to educate employees and develop internal relationships. In other words, the Envoy Program, which was designed around symmetrical communication principles, made it possible for the organization to enhance relationships with both the employees and the community.

A Normative Theory of Integrative Internal and External Relationship Management

According to Littlejohn (1995), the process of asking questions, observing phenomena, and constructing answers results in the development of a theory (p. 13). Based on literature reviews in public relations and other fields of study, I developed research questions and propositions, collected data in the field on the phenomena of interest, and provided answers to the questions posed.

At the outset of my research, I proposed five propositions. However, based on the results of my research I added one more proposition and restated two of the initial propositions. Marshall and Rossman (1995) explained that in a qualitative study, the researcher may find other significant patterns of phenomena upon entry into the field and the propositions or guiding hypothesis may evolve. In this study, confirming or disconfirming assertions or hypothesis was not the goal. Instead of limiting the research to sets of anticipated findings, I opted for developing a normative theory that incorporates emergent findings of the study. As a result, my theory of integrative internal and external relationship management is comprised of six propositions. In the following, the final six propositions will be discussed in detail along with the original propositions if modifications or additions were made.

The propositions establish public relations' role as an integrative, internal, and external relationship management function. More specifically, the propositions deal with the associations among EOR, EPR, and OPR and the resulting employee roles. They also identify the communication principles that should be used, and the organizational conditions under which public relations can enact its role as an integrative relationship management function. Evidence to support these propositions

comes largely from the data collected through interviews, document analysis, direct observations, participant observations, and secondary data analysis. Figure 5 summarizes the propositions and supporting evidence.

Proposition 1. When employees develop positive EOR and EPR, publics who interact with them are likely to develop positive OPR.

The data gathered in this study supported this proposition. In my interviews with CAC and non-CAC members who interacted with envoys, I examined the quality of OPR between the lab and surrounding communities. Since CAC members came from representative community groups on Long Island, their responses were particularly helpful in exploring the quality of OPR. I found that most of the community members interviewed had relatively positive opinions of the lab.

Aside from the control-mutuality element, members gave the lab credit for its commitment to the community and experienced high levels of trust and satisfaction. "Everything is a lot better than it was," one member told me. Another member said she felt the "relationship between the lab and [herself] is a friendly one." As for the control-mutuality dimension, community members had mixed feelings and were not sure to what extent their opinions counted. The lab and the community agreed that the community had a limited degree of control. Through data analysis, I concluded that both CAC and non-CAC members felt the lab succeeded in improving the once deteriorated relationship it had with the community.

Figure 5.

Proposition and Supporting Evidence

Proposition	Evidence
1. When employees develop positive EOR and EPR, publics who interact with them are likely to develop positive OPR.	• Participating employees displayed high affective commitment to the organization. • Non-CAC members positively evaluated their individual relationships with the envoys, and evaluated the organization positively. • CAC members' evaluations of OPR were positive, and indicated high levels of trust, satisfaction, and commitment.
2. A symmetrical, internal communication system contributes to the development of positive EOR.	• BNL's internal communication system reflected symmetrical principles. • The lab director's symmetrical communication style during the crisis contributed to the development of employee trust.

Figure 5.

Proposition and Supporting Evidence (cont'd)

Proposition	Evidence
3. Employees' positive EOR motivates them to proactively create positive EPR.	• During the tritium crisis, concerned employees volunteered for community outreach activities. • 15% of lab employees currently volunteer for community outreach.
4. Positive EPR occurs when employees use symmetrical cultivation strategies to build individual relationships with the publics and have a dual commitment to the organization and the publics.	• Envoys used symmetrical cultivation strategies such as openness, access, responsiveness, and assurance. • Community members considered envoys friends and neighbors, not organizational representatives. • Envoys saw themselves as a part of the surrounding community.

Figure 5.

Proposition and Supporting Evidence (cont'd)

Proposition	Evidence
5. Employees who participate in symmetrical public relations activities to cultivate relationships with external publics also feel empowered inside the organization, which enhances their EOR.	• Use of symmetrical communication strategies in the Envoy Program contributed to the development of positive EPR. • Participation in external PR programs empowered employees: added a meaningful dimension to employees' work life, produced well-informed employees, fostered development of an internal community.
6. The dominant coalition's support for public relations, and participation in public relations activities, are critical to the effective management of EOR, EPR, and OPR.	• The ALD at CEGPA had a seat at the dominant coalition meetings and a direct reporting relationship with the lab director. • Public relations was an integrated function. • The leadership was physically present at community meetings and other outreach efforts. The leaders communicated directly with the publics when necessary.

At BNL, the development of positive OPR was due, in part, to the positive EPR created by the community outreach programs. The Envoy Program was especially successful at encouraging interpersonal communication between the employees and publics and significantly contributed to the successful development of positive OPR during the crisis. Envoys facilitated understanding between the lab and the community. When community members developed positive relationships with the envoys, they had considerable confidence in the information and opinions the envoys shared about the lab. One said, "I am looking at it [the lab] more as a open-minded [person], see what's interesting about it, look into it, more than jumping into conclusions." Most community members, like this one, said that their trusting relationship with the envoys enabled them to give the lab the benefit of the doubt in the face of negative press. The members would simply double check the facts before making hasty judgments. Hence, the lab benefited from the trust publics had in the employees with whom they interacted.

According to the Community Involvement manager, most of the employees who volunteered for community outreach programs were respected members of the surrounding communities. The CEGPA division intentionally recruited employees who already had good relationships with the external publics. For example, at the outset of the Envoy Program, employees who were considered to have good reputations within the community, or who were seen as opinion leaders, were recruited as ambassadors to their communities. However, the program also recruited employees with the potential to become good ambassadors for the lab. The Envoy Program

implementation plan (Brookhaven National Laboratory, n.d.g.) outlined the recruiting criteria as follows:

In order for the recruit to be effective, he/she should be:

- A good listener and personable

- A relationship-builder

- Involved with personal, social, or professional organizations

- Willing to devote time to review timely Laboratory materials

Envoys will be expected to participate in the Program's training and briefing sessions to enhance their potential for effectiveness as an envoy.

Envoys should be objective listeners to the community's concerns about the Lab. (p. 2)

Through programs such as the Envoy Program, the lab built onto existing positive EPR and initiated the development of positive OPR. In this regard, employee volunteers spanned the gap between the organization and its environment. Employees drew their community relationships into the organization and extended their organizational relationships out to the community.

In order for an organization to draw employees' positive EPR into the organization, the organization itself must have positive EOR. This study supported my argument because lab employees who spanned the gap did have positive EOR. BNL employee participants showed high levels of affective commitment to the organization. Employees were quite satisfied with their jobs, although there were some concerns about the decrease in employee benefits and the changes under the new management.

The following response from an employee illustrates these concerns: "Things have been cut back, not as many services are being provided, and part of that is cost. So there has been a change…Even though it has changed a lot, compared to the outside world, it still is a very, very good place." The employee retention rate was impressive, with more than 20% of employees staying with the lab for more than 10 years (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003b). This high retention rate substantiated the lab's positive EOR with its employees.

The typology of the organization partly explains the level of satisfaction and retention rate among employees. Although it is a government organization, the lab, which is managed by a consortium of a non-profit research and development organization and an academic institution, is similar to a university. The lab's cutting-edge facilities presented an ideal setting for scientific research. "I think they let me do what I want to do. I mean, I can choose my research project. I am satisfied with what I do," one scientist told me.

The technicians and operations staff offered similar responses. One technician said, "I get up very few times that I feel like I don't want to come to work." An operations staff member responded in much the same way by saying that the lab was "a very interesting place to work at" and there were "[a]lot of different opportunities to interact with people and expand my knowledge in things." Such high levels of satisfaction might not have been found among BNL employees were it not for the lab's identity as a not-for-profit organization. As one employee explained to me, "If it is a profit-driven company, this [employee work satisfaction] I don't think happens the same ay unless you are a small company."

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Figure 6.

Possible Cases of EOR-EPR-OPR

	EOR	EPR	OPR	Likelihood
Quality of	+	+	+	Highly likely
Relationships	+	+	-	Not likely
	+	_	+	Not likely
	+	_	_	Likely
	_	+	+	Not likely
	_	+	_	Likely
	_	_	+	Not likely
	_	_	_	Highly likely

Overall, the study showed that the positive link between EOR and OPR occurred when committed, individual employees were capable of developing positive EPR. External publics who came in contact with these employees were more likely to develop positive relationships with the organization. However, the interconnections among EOR, EPR, and OPR warrant further explanation.

The associations among the three concepts are not necessarily sequential. It cannot be argued that an employee's good EOR always leads to the sequential development of positive EPR and OPR. As shown in Figure 6, this is only one of several different possibilities. For instance, it is possible that even when EOR is positive, negative EPR and OPR might occur. In such a case, a good employee might

be content with his organization but may not be a respected member of his community. He or she is, therefore, unlikely to contribute to positive EPR and OPR.

In another case, an employee may not have good EOR but manages to develop a good relationship with an external public. This employee is less likely to relay as much positivity about the organization as he would if he had positive EOR. However, the positive EPR will cause the public to seriously consider the employee's negative opinions of the organization. Consequently the public's level of trust in the organization will be reduced. In this scenario, although EPR is positive, it does not lead to the development of positive OPR.

Given the complex dynamics of the EOR-EPR-OPR link, the quality of both EOR and EPR must be positive to ensure the development of positive OPR. In the following propositions, I clarify how the development of positive EOR and EPR should occur.

Proposition 2. A symmetrical, internal communication system contributes to the development of positive EOR.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, BNL's internal communication system displayed symmetrical characteristics. "There is nobody that has roadblocks to their immediate supervisor at any level," one employee told me. Not all employees displayed this same level of confidence; however, most employees felt they could freely express their concerns and recognized the existence of formal mechanisms such as peer advocacy groups. Mediated employee communication, such as the Monday Memo, allowed direct access to the lab director and displayed symmetrical characteristics.

In fields such as business management, organizational communication, and public relations, scholars have long argued that the quality of internal communication can predict employee job satisfaction—that is, the quality of EOR (J. Grunig, 1992b; Jo, Shim, & Kim, 2002; Miles, Patrick, & King, 1996). J. Grunig, in particular, argued that an internal communication system that is governed by symmetrical principles contributes to the development of positive EOR.

My observations and interviews in this study also indicated that the lab's symmetrical, internal communication systems resulted in employees' positive evaluations of the lab and a high level of commitment. The contrasting communication behavior between the different leadership—DOE and BSA—also helped me to understand the impact of internal communication systems on employees.

The DOE's abrupt announcement of the closing of the reactor that caused the tritium leak was a vivid example of how asymmetrical communication could negatively affect the employees' opinion of the organization. However, the new director, Jack Marburger, approached employee communication very differently. A CEGPA staff told me that, during the crisis, Marburger would hold "all-hands" meetings. All-hands meetings are similar to town hall meetings, in which all employees gather to listen to the director's updates on the crisis situation and to discuss their concerns.

The director also conducted focus groups to gather employees' thoughts and concerns. One employee explained: "He [Marburger] was far more accessible than [previous director]. [Previous director] was very insulated. To get to [the previous director], you went through 15 other ALDs." This employee also said that Marburger

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provided opportunities for employees to talk directly to him. Employees in this study often mentioned how helpful this type of communication was in alleviating uncertainty among the employees. The lab was able to maintain employee trust in the lab in part because of its symmetrical communication with them. An employee explained that she would not have been an envoy if she "didn't have confidence where [I was] working." When employees trust an organization, they are more likely to confidently interact with community members. This argument is further developed in the next proposition.

Proposition 3. Employees' positive EOR motivates them to proactively develop positive EPR.

Organizational scholars believe that committed employees who have good relationships with their organizations will "go above and beyond the norm in doing the little things that help organization[s] function effectively" (Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001, p. 93). Niehoff et al. further maintained that committed employees "can serve as public relations representative[s] outside the organization" (p. 93).

A top manager informed me that, during the tritium crisis, many concerned employees volunteered for community outreach activities. "When the lab was going through a difficult time period of very negative feelings from the community, it was very important to me to try to help get the word out," one employee told me. She further explained:

It actually hurt to work here as a very dedicated employee, knowing that we were working with all the regulatory agencies, dealing with whatever we

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needed to do in terms of getting permits to operate our facilities in accordance

with environmental requirements, disposing our waste according to

requirements. And then, to see what's being said outside, [it] did not set well

with me. As a result of that, I was very willing to participate in a lot of the

community meetings, trying to answer questions people had. It was very

important to me not necessarily to change peoples' minds, but give them the

information.

Five years after the crisis, approximately 15% of the employees (a total of 400) still

volunteer for community outreach programs. In this study, the data suggested that at

BNL, employees' high level of affective commitment indicated they had positive EOR.

Their commitment led them to willingly engage in proactive relationship building with

the publics. Therefore, Proposition 2 was supported by the data collected in this study.

As was argued in Proposition 1, when committed employees go outside the

organization, their positive attitudes are expected to facilitate the development of

positive relationships with external publics. Employees I interviewed were also

cognizant of the ways in which the quality of their EOR could affect their interaction

with publics. As one envoy said: "If you're not happy in what you're doing, you can't

project that same image to the outside people. People will see through it very easily.

You can't fake it." Most other employees also believed that the publics would easily

interpret the positive attitude she or he had about the lab.

As Brief (1998) explained in his theory of "caught attitudes," publics can

recognize the attitudes of employees they encounter, and will adopt employees'

attitudes. In other words, external publics easily identify the level of commitment or

quality of EOR an employee has. The "emotional contagion" theory suggested by Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson (1994) is also relevant. According to this theory, one "catches" a person's feelings through interaction with that person. Scholars argue that true emotions "leak" through even when people try to hide them in interactions with others (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Ekman, 1985; Ekman, Friesen, & O'Sullivan, 1988).

The emotional contagion theory suggests that, even when an organization mandates that employees interact optimistically with publics, the relationship building process will be ineffective if the employees are not genuinely committed to their organization. "He [the envoy] truly loves what he does," one community member told me. Community members noticed the individual passion and sincerity of the lab employees they encountered. When positive EPR was then established, the public made fair judgments about the envoy's organization.

Similar responses were found among the community members. For example, the abovementioned community member said his experience with the envoy affected his view of the lab in "a favorable position." This member's envoy confirmed the shift in his opinion of the lab. The envoy said that, in the past, the community member would "joke all the time about 'Oh, you glow in the dark.' I don't hear the joke that he used to make anymore."

Positive EOR may not instantly cause external publics to change their attitudes or behavior towards the organization. However, at the very least, community members recognize the employees' commitment to the lab and develop positive cursory impressions or evaluations of the organization. Therefore, identification and

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recruitment of genuinely committed employees is critical for the development of positive EPR. Aside from the employee's level of commitment, there are several other factors to consider when recruiting employees for public relations activities.

Proposition 4. Positive EPR occurs when employees use symmetrical cultivation strategies to build individual relationships with the publics and have a dual commitment to the organization and the publics.

This proposition is the first of the two restated propositions. The initial proposition stated: Positive EPR occurs when employees use symmetrical cultivation strategies to build individual relationships with the publics. However, the data suggested that in addition to employees' use of symmetrical cultivation strategies, the dual commitment of employees was also a critical factor in development of positive EPR in the case organization. Detailed discussion on the dual commitment follows in a later section.

As was discussed in previous sections, envoys were capable of using symmetrical cultivation strategies. Paired with community members' responses, the data indicated that the envoys' use of symmetrical strategies contributed to the development of positive relations between the two. Strategies such as openness, access, responsiveness, listening, and respect were used by the envoys in their role as the "ears" of the organization.

I found that the interpersonal nature of the outreach programs facilitated implementation of the symmetrical principles of communication. This was due in part to the distinctive character of interpersonal communication compared to mass-mediated communication, as summarized in Figure 7. Often, organizations

Figure 7.

Characteristics of External Communication at Organization and Employee Level

	Organization Level	Employee Level
Channel	Mass media	Interpersonal
Message	Official position/Formal	Insiders' story/Informal
Purpose	Primarily promotion	Interpretation/Clarification
Direction	Primarily one-way	Two-way

communicate carefully planned and refined messages through mass-mediated channels. These messages often leave audiences feeling that the organization is on the defensive, especially when the messages deal with negative situations.

In this study, community members expressed skepticism toward mass media messages. A member told me: "If you are trying to promote it [the lab] through newspapers or whatever, people are going to be skeptical. People are just gonna say 'Oh, they are trying to win us over.' And if they don't believe what they read in the newspaper, you might be undermining what you're trying to do." An envoy also shared his observation about mass-mediated communication: "What you hear and read about in the media, that's nice, but sometimes I suspect at best it's [describing negative events] a lot worse than [it really is]. Usually when people want to know, they want to hear from people."

Given the casual nature of interaction in the Envoy Program, unrefined, rather than mass-mediated, messages were inevitably exchanged. Envoys were able to offer

an insider's perspective rather than an official, sanitized view of the organization. Community members used their interpersonal relationships with the envoys to cross-reference what they saw or heard about the lab in the news media. This point is illustrated by a community member who read a story about possible water contamination around the lab: "[I thought] 'Gee…let me ask her [envoy]. She can maybe shed some light on the water situation.' And she [envoy] started explaining about all the studies that they had done. She showed me articles that were written, and so it helped clear up the concerns that I had."

In this way, envoys contributed to the personification of the organization. An employee explained the personification process in the following way: "[Being an envoy] is also being able to provide a face to the lab as an entity, and you are a person who knows how to go about the system and as a contact, able to give information." Community members also felt the envoys made the organization more approachable by, as one member phrased it, "putting a face" on the lab.

The use of interpersonal communication and symmetrical cultivation strategies at the employee level often resulted in the development of positive personal relationships. I found that when employees and community members developed positive personal relationships with one another, publics were more inclined to trust the envoys. In other words, when envoys were viewed as friends and neighbors rather than organizational representatives, the envoys' level of credibility with the publics increased. Even before the crisis, many employees already had positive relationships with community members. As the following quote from an envoy indicates, the lab took advantage of these existing relationships:

I think it was a good thing to have the Envoy program. Because again, it's the

people [employees] that are already active. You are not seeing people coming

out of the woodwork wondering who are you, and why are you here? It's

"You've always been here and, O.K., if you work for them and are still

working for them, and you are saying these, maybe there are some truth to it.

Then I won't necessarily listen to the media," and you are trying to bridge the

gap between what's in the paper and what the facts are, and they can see that

we are O.K. I think that's how you build trust. I don't think the lab director

could necessarily have done that on his own.

Other envoys developed friendships with community members through

repeated interactions with them, even when no prior relationship existed. One envoy

told me that, after four years of interaction with a property owners' association, she

has built personal relationships with them: "I have a very strong relationship with

them. When I moved out of the area and said I am not going to be insulted if they

wanted someone else to replace me [as an envoy], but they didn't want that. They

don't seem to want me to go." She also receives invitations to the community groups'

social gatherings, such as the annual tea parties. When I interviewed a community

member with whom this envoy interacts, the member described how her organization

"adopted" the envoy. Whether employees had existing personal relationships with the

community members before becoming envoys, or developed them after becoming an

envoy, these relationships were an important basis upon which community members

evaluated and processed information about the lab.

Employees' dual commitment to the organization and the publics also contributed to the development of positive EPR. "I am also a member of the community, so I think I have the trust of the group that I am a part of them [community]" and "We are them [community]" were common responses from several envoys. Envoys were interested in maintaining their personal reputation as trusted and respected members of the community. "I don't see myself as somebody who will say BNL has no fault. I am not the management saying, 'We'll do whatever we can.' I will say what I know and find out for them so that they can talk to somebody who knows," an envoy told me.

Envoys were successful at developing positive EPR partly because their dual commitment to the organization and the community allowed them to remain objective. Had the dual commitment not existed, community members would have regarded the envoys as an extension of a publicity effort, and would not have trusted the envoys nearly as much. A community member supported this notion, saying: "Most companies will protect their own selves and will tell you what you want to hear. Knowing [envoy name] gets me inside, telling me right out and upfront what really is going on. And if she says nothing, I would take her word, because I do trust her." Another envoy also explained that the "Envoy Program works because you are viewed as neighbors. Otherwise, it's viewed as PR from the lab and that doesn't work as well."

Overall, BNL's public relations activities occurred at three different levels— the top management level, the public relations practitioners' level, and the non-public relations employee level. The top managers and public relations practitioners may

better represent the organization than non-public relations employees. However, non-public relations employees who had positive, personal relationships with the publics were considered more credible by community members than were the public relations practitioners.

In conclusion, to develop positive EPR for public relations purposes, employees who encounter the publics must be competent in symmetrical cultivation strategies and employees should have a dual commitment to the organization and the publics.

Proposition 5. Employees who participate in symmetrical public relations activities to cultivate relationships with external publics also feel empowered inside the organization, which enhances their EOR.

Based on the unexpected findings of the study, I newly added this proposition. Initially, I focused only on how the internal communication system would affect the quality of EOR. As was discussed in Proposition 2, organizational communication scholars argue that positive EOR is developed mainly through internal communication systems or programs. However, this study found that enhancement of EOR can also occur through employees' participation in external communication activities.

The study found that involvement in public relations activities empowered participating employees, leading to the enhancement of EOR. The following response from an employee illustrates how empowerment occurs:

> When you do good to your community, you do good to yourself, too, because
> you feel good about what it is that you are doing, and you are forging
> relationships with people [other employees who volunteer] you work with, you

probably didn't know that you have similar interest. It is just another way that people [employees] can bond. It's good for employee morale.

According to Spreitzer (1995), employee empowerment has four components: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning is "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards" (p. 1443). The following responses from envoys verified the existence of this component. "I think it [Envoy Program] facilitates two ideals I have. I want people [within her community] to feel comfortable [about the lab] and, you know, I want to help the lab." Another envoy explained that the program was "morale boosting because it's like I have more purpose in what I'm doing in my job."

In the empowerment theory, competence refers to "an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill," (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443). The envoys clearly considered themselves capable of listening and facilitating objectively. Envoys also showed self-determination, which reflects "autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes," (p. 1443) because they voluntarily participated in outreach programs for the long term.

Programs such as the CAC, Envoy Program, and Summer Sundays provided opportunities for employees to fulfill the social responsibility of the organization. This meant that employees helped the organization improve by enabling it to make well-informed decisions. Employees believed they were making an impact, a concept Spreitzer (1995) described as "the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes" (p. 1443).

Public relations programs that encouraged employee involvement were effective in creating a sense of community not only between the employees and the publics but also among participating employees. Employees learned how their roles in the community fit with the mission of the organization. As Kruckeberg and Stark (1988) put it, public relations facilitated communication and helped to "build sense of community among members of an organization and the community public" (p. 71).

This empirical study showed how the synergy between internal and external public relationships occurred. More specifically, the study confirmed that, as a communication management function, public relations can help an organization to simultaneously build better OPR and EOR by involving employees in its activities.

Proposition 6. The dominant coalition's support for public relations, and participation in public relations activities, are critical to the effective management of EOR, EPR, and OPR.

The initial proposition stated: The dominant coalition's support for public relations is critical to the effective management of EOR, EPR, and OPR. Based on the results of this study, I concluded that in addition to the dominant coalition's support for the public relations function, its active participation in the public relations activities was also critical for successful relationship building. Therefore, I added the participation aspect into the initial proposition.

For an organization to successfully build positive, long-term relationships with its internal and external publics, and for public relations to contribute to this task, the public relations function must be prepared. In the case organization, I found that much of the structure of the communication management function, and its models of

communication, reflected the leadership's view of communication. A comparison of the previous and current management's practices provided evidence to support this finding.

The dominant coalition supported the case organization by assuring that the ALD of the CEGPA division attended management meetings and reported directly to the lab director. Prior to the management change, BNL's communication functions were scattered throughout the laboratory, making it difficult for the lab to coherently communicate with its external publics. After the management change, the communication function was integrated into one directorate. Jack Marburger's support for the CEGPA directorate was often mentioned by the CEGPA staff. For example, the CAC was born under Marburger's leadership. According to the CEGPA ALD, the lab debated developing a CAC because it meant the lab would be committing to a costly, long-term relationship with the community. However, the ALD explained: "The new lab director, Jack Marburger, said that he wanted to do it. And there was no debate about it, and we went ahead."

The current lab director's description of the value of public relations provides evidence that support from top management continues: "I think a national lab has to have a person who has a very broad perspective, and they are on the table all the time saying that, 'I think what you are suggesting is good, but here is how the public will perceive it.'"

The public relations division played a key role in fostering a climate of positive relationship building with its external publics by providing information, resources, counsel, and rewards according to the symmetrical communication principles. For

instance, the public relations division was responsible for such organizational practices as the one-on-one training of high-level managers in community involvement procedures. The public relations division also managed rewards such as the annual luncheon and appreciation plaques for employee volunteers.

In addition to its support of public relations, the leadership's communication behavior greatly affected the climate of positive relationship building. This was consistent with results of research conducted by Pincus, Rayfield, and Cozzens (1991). Pincus et al. maintained that the top management support of and participation in public relations programs is critical for successful public relations and called for further research on leadership communication behaviors in public relations. In the case organization, Jack Marburger's legacy of relationship building showed the effect leadership can have on an organization. Employees and community members alike viewed visible leadership communication as an indication of the organization's commitment to community relationship building, which in turn affected the level of trust in the organization.

According to Allert and Chatterjee (1997), a leader must competently exhibit "the innate traits of optimism, cleverness, creativity, pragmatism and vigilance," (p. 15) in order to instill trust in his or her internal and external stakeholders. Based on the results of this study, I define a leader's communication competency as his or her ability to use symmetrical cultivation strategies, rather than as a factor of the personal traits outlined by Allert and Chatterjee.

The study offered evidence to support my definition. For instance, the rebuilding of the community's trust was in part due to Marburger's ability to use

symmetrical communication strategies. He listened and responded personally to community concerns through his active participation in the community outreach programs. In addition, the lab leadership consistently participated in community meetings and other community outreach efforts that were guided by the symmetrical principle of listening.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provided support for Proposition 6. In order for an organization to successfully build positive internal and external relationships, the leadership of an organization must first recognize and champion the value of relationship building and the public relations function's role therein. In addition, the leaders should be an integral part of an organization's public relations activities because their impact on the publics' views of the organization is significant.

Evaluation of This Study

At the outset of this research, I discussed evaluation criteria for qualitative research. In evaluating this study, I will refer to the criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is the criterion that deals with the extent to which the subject of investigation is accurately identified and portrayed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using member validation, in which the researcher seeks participants' feedback on data interpretations. Member validation can be either formal or informal. Formal member validation usually takes the form of an interview between one or more participants and the researcher. Toward the end of the research process, I shared excerpts from my results section with a public relations practitioner who participated

in this study. Through two phone conversations and e-mail exchanges, I solicited the practitioner's feedback and had discussions on results of my study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggested informal member checking, which occurs daily in the course of the investigation. During my fieldwork, I was able to engage in informal conversations with the practitioners, because I was residing in the organization and went to work from 9 to 5 just as they did. I also had several occasions in which I met the non-public relations employees I had interviewed at the dining hall or hallways. In these informal discussions, some of them even suggested further venues for my research. I recorded any significant discussions about my research or any interesting ideas that occurred through these conversations in my research journal.

Peer debriefing is another method Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested for credibility. Toward the end of the research process, I discussed my findings with two other colleagues in the department, which helped me question my results and provided insights into data analysis. Peer debriefing led me to think about other conflicting interpretations in the analysis process. Triangulation is another method suggested by Lincoln and Guba. In this research, I collected interview data, observational data, and document data. By making comparisons among the different types of data and analyzing them, I was able to increase the credibility of my research. Through member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation, I believe I was able to establish credibility of my research.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability is the extent to which the results can be extrapolated to other situations or groups. Lincoln and Guba

explained that a researcher should provide "the thick description necessary" or "the *data base* that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). In this research, I believe I have provided detailed discussion on the context of the case organization, which will allow potential appliers to determine the extent of similarity or dissimilarity with their own research context of interest. In addition, in discussing the results of this study, I have provided extensive quotations, which will allow potential researchers to derive their own conclusions from the data and determine whether transfer can be made.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that dependability is synonymous with "stability, consistency, and predictability" (p. 298). It is similar to the reliability concept in quantitative research. They suggested an "inquiry audit" that examines "the process of the inquiry" (p. 318). Kirk and Miller (1986) similarly explained that reliability of qualitative research hinges on extensively described research procedures. In this research, I have provided detailed descriptions of the research procedures. In chapters III and IV, I have discussed in detail my access to the organization, recruitment of participants, each data collection method used, and data analysis processes. I have also included my research expenses as an appendix (Appendix J).

In addition, Kirk and Miller explained that reliability is meaningful "only by reference to some theory" (p. 50). Throughout the research process, I also addressed dependability issues by continuously checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. I continuously went back and forth between the literature and field to enhance the dependability of the study. I believe I have established an acceptable level of dependability in this study.

Confirmability deals with the characteristics of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that in qualitative research, instead of questioning a researcher's objectivity, the question is whether the data are confirmable. Lincoln and Guba suggested techniques such as a confirmability audit by another researcher, triangulation, and keeping a reflexive journal. In this research, I used two of the techniques suggested. As discussed in the previous section, I used method triangulation. I also kept a research journal, in which I recorded daily schedules, logistics of the study, my feelings, observations, immediate analyses, and methodological issues. Having another researcher conduct a confirmability audit, suggested by Lincoln and Guba, was not feasible considering the promised individual confidentiality with my participants. However, if an audit was conducted on the research instruments, interview transcripts, documents, field notes, and the research journal, I believe the auditor would have been able to confirm that the results of this study were not based entirely on the researcher's bias. In this sense, I believe this study has sufficient confirmability.

Limitations

Data gathered in this study were rich; however, investigation of similar organizations would have provided further insights. Investigation of for-profit organizations would also have elicited valuable, comparative results. However, the study provided important insights into the employees' role in the development of OPR. In addition, the participating organization has been recognized for its excellence in community relations programs, making this an exemplary case study. Furthermore, my study is worthwhile in that I gained access to, and conducted on-site field research of,

a government science organization. Public relations scholars have not extensively researched this type of organization in the past.

If a researcher is given permission to name the organization at the outset of a study, the result could be positive researcher bias. However, in my case, the organization's permission to name it in the dissertation was given at the end of the study; and that decision was made before reviewing the completed dissertation. This helped me to attain adequate distance as a researcher. However, the possibility of researcher bias should be acknowledged. As was discussed in previous chapters, BNL provided the researcher access to its internal meetings, documentations, and opportunities to interact with the top managers through social events such as the director's reception. Although I made a conscious effort to maintain appropriate distance as a researcher by keeping a research journal and reminding myself of the research questions, the openness and support for my research may have influenced me to make favorable interpretations.

It was challenging for a single researcher to collect data from documents, participant observations, and interviews in only a seven-week period. I conducted at least two to three interviews on a regular business day for a total of 63 interviews, and participated in four internal meetings and three events. It was also time consuming to drive around Long Island to conduct the interviews with community members. I was on a tight schedule during business days, which required a great deal of physical strength.

Another limitation I experienced involved the recruitment of community members for interviews. I resided at the organization, so employees were easily

accessible. However, recruiting the community members who interacted with the employees I interviewed was a difficult task. Overall, I conducted 27 interviews with community members: nine of them with regular CAC members recruited during a CAC meeting; eight with community members who interacted with envoys; and 10 informal interviews with community members during the Summer Sundays event.

The recruitment of community members who interacted with envoys was most challenging. I asked each of the 16 envoys I interviewed to introduce me to community members with whom they interact. This produced a list of 12 names, but only eight agreed to an interview. After the recruitment, a lot of additional time and planning were invested in interviewing the eight community members by phone for 30 minutes.

Had more community members been interviewed, I might have recorded additional, insightful findings for the study. I do believe, however, that my interviews with community members reached a saturation point, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Toward the end of my interviews with community members, I found that interviewees repeatedly discussed similar themes and categories and that no significantly different data were emerging. I believe I was also able to gain additional insights on community member perspectives through my interviews with employees who interact closely with the community.

Implications for Public Relations Theory

The Excellence Theory and Relationship Management

This study has several implications for public relations theory. One contribution this study makes to theory is that it successfully synthesizes the excellence and relationship management theories. The study demonstrated that the realization of the principles outlined in the excellence study do contribute to an organization's successful development of positive relationships with internal and external publics.

In the area of internal communication, the study managed to expand beyond the excellence theory. The excellence theory focused on the contribution made by symmetrical, internal communication to the development of positive relationships with and support from employees. My study went beyond the theory to discover concrete evidence of the ways in which positive employee relationships can support an organization's goals. I found that employee participation in public relations enables an organization to effectively leverage employee-public relationships for the development of positive OPR. My study also demonstrated the ways in which external public relations programs can contribute to the development of positive employee relationships. Following is a detailed discussion of my study's revelations regarding the role employees play in public relations.

Employees' Role in PR

To this point, public relations scholars have limited their focus to a discussion of the methods and impact of employee communication (Jo, Shim, & Kim, 2002). Jo et al. argued that, considering the importance of employee relationships to an

organization's effectiveness, the scope of study should be expanded. They called for a redefinition of employee communication under the relationship theories. In this study, I applied the relationship management theory to employee communication and further advanced the discussion in the public relations field.

In addition to expanding the scope of study on employee communication, this study empirically demonstrated how committed employees become a valuable asset to public relations functions. Furthermore, the study showed how positive, internal relationships significantly influenced the development of positive OPR and delineated public relations' contribution to this process. Most importantly, I found that employees were empowered by their involvement in public relations activities.

The results of this study suggest that public relations can and should be responsible for creating synergy between internal and external relationships, without encroaching on other organizational functions. For instance, I do not suggest that public relations should oversee human resource responsibilities such as benefits, salary, or recruitment of employees. As J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggested, I propose that public relations become the integrated communication management function for all stakeholder relationships.

Relationship Management in Public Relations

Refinement of the OPR Concept

Results of this study contributed to the refinement of relationship concepts in public relations by exploring the subjective perceptions of OPR. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined OPR 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). This definition implies that OPR occurs only when both parties have positive opinions about one another. However, this study found that OPR can also occur when the organization or the publics' behaviors have negative consequences on each other. I also found that the publics most likely to perceive they had a relationship with the organization were those who were highly involved and who engaged in active communication behavior. Hence, the study confirmed the value of identifying and segmenting strategic publics for relationship management in public relations.

I also found that repetitive communication influenced the subjective perceptions of OPR. This finding contributes to the discussion of the differentiation between the concepts of "relationships" and "communication." The study supported J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (2002) conclusion that communication is a process that leads to relationship outcomes. My in-field, qualitative case study confirmed that public relations practitioners are not able to manage the quality of OPR itself, but rather that they can manage the cultivation strategies that lead to OPR outcomes.

New Cultivation Strategies

This study provided empirical data on the association between cultivation strategies and resulting relationship outcomes. Interviews with employees and community members confirmed that symmetrical strategies were, in fact, effective in building positive relationships. Given the nature of the organization, BNL frequently engages in risk communication. As a result, new cultivation strategies such as visible leadership, face-to-face communication, listening, responsiveness, patience, and educational communication, were identified to improve communication.

This study identified the critical importance of visible leadership. Both employees and publics felt the communication behavior of the organization's leadership affected the evaluation of OPR. In particular, the leadership's communication behavior had a direct effect on community members' level of trust and commitment. To this point, the public relations field has not extensively studied the communication behavior of leadership and its impact on relationship outcomes. Results of this study indicated the need for further exploration of leadership's role in relationship management.

BNL used ongoing communication and patience as key public relations strategies. Positive relationships can only be expected to evolve when long-term efforts are in place. For instance, the CAC and the Envoy Program have existed for over four years. Educational communication was another strategy relevant to the scientific context of the organization. The organization needed to interpret advanced scientific concepts to community members in order to prevent the misunderstanding or mystification of activities at the lab. The study showed that misinformation can cause a public relations disaster for a science organization. Results of this study provided a more extensive understanding of science communication than had previously been available in the field of public relations.

In order to effectively explore cultivation strategies, organizations must carefully consider the type and context of the organization. The case organization was a government lab in which profit-making was not a major concern. In a non-profit, risk communication setting, relationship management theories in public relations were effective in explaining the organization's communication behaviors and outcomes.

Coorientational Evaluation of OPR

Scholars such as Aldoory (2001) and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) called for a more "coorientational" study of relationships in public relations. This study contributed to the development of coorientational knowledge in relationship management because interviews were conducted with the two OPR parties— organizational employees and community members. This qualitative research study is unique because it explored both sides' stories. I also believe this research to be one of the first public relations studies to attempt an examination of the individual relationship pairs.

This study found that publics used OPR constructs to evaluate OPR, as was suggested by previous research. However, I found that both the organization and the publics felt trust was the most salient dimension in their evaluation of the quality of OPR. Overall, existing relationship dimensions appropriately described the organization and public's perceptions of the quality of their relationship.

Heuristic Value

This study is also significant in that it examined the initiation, development, and cultivation of OPR in a real-life setting. The study closely followed the methods by which public relations practitioners, non-public relations employees, and publics engaged in the relationship building process. The study should, therefore, provide valuable insights to students and scholars interested in discovering this theory at work in a real-life setting.

In many ways, BNL can be considered an atypical organization that had a more excellent public relations department than other organizations. Because of its

uniqueness and excellence, the case was especially important for developing a normative theory that can provide a model for other organizations to emulate.

My theory also adds value to public relations scholarship by prompting further discussion and exploration of employees' roles in public relations and the contribution public relations can make as an empowerment mechanism. I believe my study has deepened the discussion of the linkage theory suggested by other disciplines. Based on the findings presented in this study, scholars in other disciplines, such as management and organizational psychology, might further investigate the complex associations among employees, publics, and organizational effectiveness. As was discussed in my study, the interconnectedness of these three concepts is not sequential or linear, and therefore requires careful consideration to develop advanced linkage theories.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

The study has several implications for the public relations practice. These implications might be particularly relevant to risk communication practice because the case organization was a non-profit entity that experienced a major, environmental crisis. I believe the results of this study might also be useful in those for-profit organizations which are cognizant of their responsibility as corporate citizens, and who wish to build positive relationships with their non-consumer publics.

Becoming the Hub of Information and Support for Relationship Building

Results showed that public relations practitioners should acquire the network centrality explained by L. Grunig and Dozier (1992) to enact their role in strategic relationship management. According to L. Grunig and Dozier, network centrality means being at the right place at the right time within the organization. If a department

performs activities critical to the survival and growth of the organization, it is likely that department will be perceived as more important than others.

As was seen in this case study, the PR division facilitated the relationship between the employees and the publics. Employees regarded the public relations staff as communication counselors when they encountered problems with external publics. In this way, the public relations division relayed coherent messages about the organization's mission and values both inside and outside the organization and contributed to the development of positive internal and external relationships.

Public relations was able to create a positive climate for external relationship building by providing communication training to employees. As a result, the public relations directorate was indispensable in the effective relationship management of strategic constituents. Practitioners might use the findings of this study to position their departments in the center of the organizational network.

Interpersonal Communication

Findings on the effectiveness of interpersonal communication also provide insights for public relations professionals. As the study shows, interpersonal communication facilitated the implementation of symmetrical principles, and addressed the shortcomings of mediated communication. For instance, interpersonal communication programs effectively overcame the publics' increasing skepticism of mass media messages and enhanced the chance of developing trustful relationships. If public relations professionals wish to develop long-term, experiential relationships with their publics, they should incorporate interpersonal communication methods into

their program planning, rather than focusing solely on the use of mass mediated communication and the production of well-refined messages.

Role of Crises in Public Relations

According to L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002), public relations benefits organizations because it contributes to effective management of crises. L. Grunig et al. further explained that a crisis often is the triggering event that motivates an organization to develop an excellent public relations department. Particularly, they explained, "activism pushes the organization toward excellence as they try to cope with the expectations of their strategic constituencies" (p. 477). This clearly was the case for BNL. This study showed that when public relations practitioners help an organization to effectively deal with crises through communication, it is possible to generate increased appreciation and support for the public relations department within the organization. In this regard, the study also provides guidance and insights on how practitioners can use crises or activist pressure to generate understanding and support for their work. More specifically, public relations practitioners could adopt some of the programs examined in this study to deal with crises or activism.

Employee Relations Revisited

Results of this study indicated that the quality of an organization's relationships with its employees affects the way publics evaluate the organization. The findings of this study can be used to convince top management of the importance of employee participation in public relations. The study also details how such public relations programs can contribute to positive relationship building with employees. This study suggests that public relations practitioners should go beyond the traditional

Identification/Segmentation of Publics

- Situational Theory:
  Non-public
  Single-issue public
  All-issue public
  Hot-issue public

Identification of Interaction/ Contact Settings

- Conduct research on publics' expectations/experiences with employees

Identification/Recruitment of Employees

- Recruiting criteria:
  Level of commitment
  Communication competency

Program Design: Training/Support/Rewards

- Training of symmetrical cultivation strategies
- Designated PR practitioner as communciation counselor
- Reward systems

Evaluation

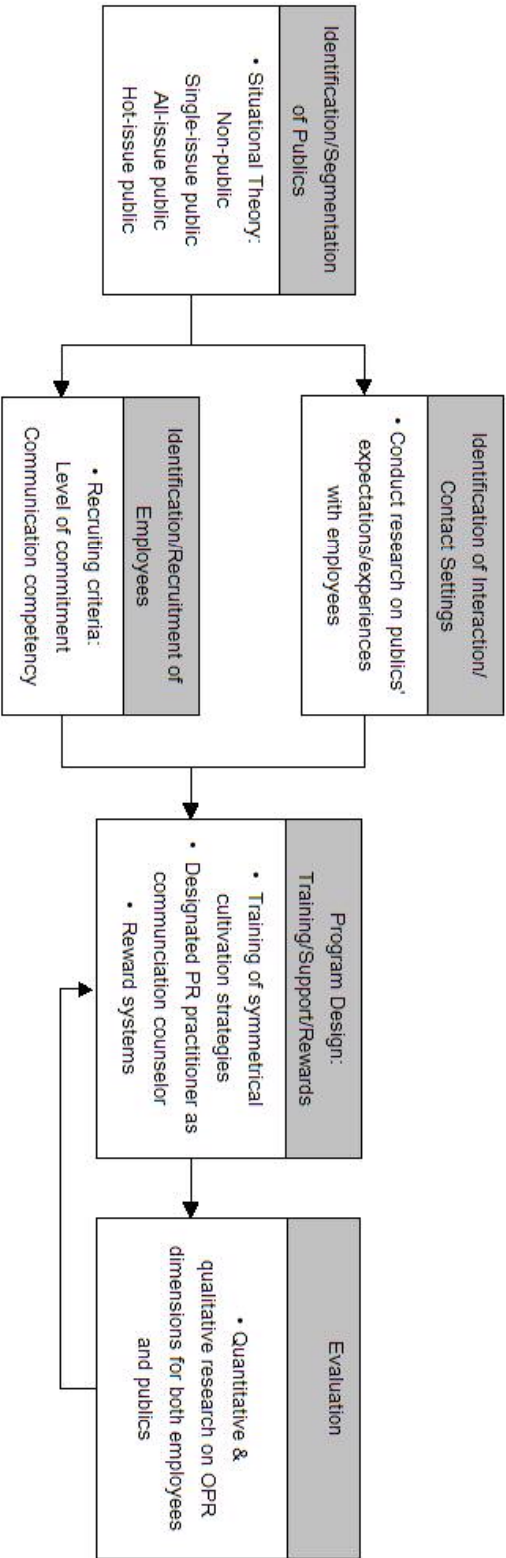- Quantitative & qualitative research on OPR dimensions for both employees and publics

Figure 8. Model for Employee Involvement in Public Relations Programs

approach to employee communication which mainly focuses on the production of employee publications.

Based on the results of this study, I have developed a practical model for incorporating employee involvement in public relations programs (Figure 8). Practitioners may use this model as a guideline to develop such programs

A Practical Model for Employee Involvement in Public Relations Programs

First, strategic external publics must be identified. Although the situational theory (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) was not a part of this study, it can provide a framework for the 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. A combination of these dimensions can identify various 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).

Next, practitioners should identify the key settings in which employees and different types of publics frequently interact. Practitioners might conduct informal and formal research, asking the identified strategic publics about their interactions with employees and the expectations they currently have of the employees. The interaction settings will differ according to the type of organization. For instance, in a consumer goods company, employees and customers may meet most frequently over the telephone. In a government organization, employees and publics may encounter each other most often in public meetings. Public relations practitioners should recruit employees based on their level of commitment and communication competence,

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focusing on those who are willing to become actively involved with the strategic publics in the identified interaction settings.

Appropriate communication programs should be designed around the identified interaction settings and expectations of external publics. The public relations function can act as a counselor to and resource for employees. A designated public relations practitioner should coordinate training sessions on symmetrical cultivation strategies, potential issues, and current events at the organization. A concrete reward system involving such bonuses as annual dinners, appreciation plaques, or if appropriate, monetary prizes, should be developed. These rewards programs should be highlighted when recruiting employees for the program.

A relevant evaluation system should be developed at the outset of the program, and a post-program evaluation should also be implemented. OPR dimensions can be used for quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the quality of employee and public relationships resulting from the program.

<div align="center">Suggestions for Brookhaven National Laboratory</div>

Based on the findings of this study, I make the following suggestions for BNL's public relations practice. During my residency at the lab, I had opportunities to share my observations and analysis with the lab director and the CEGPA managers. The suggestions I gave to BNL management are also discussed below.

<div align="center">*Employee Communication Management*</div>

One key observation made during my study was the perceived division between the scientists and the support staff. I shared this observation with the lab director and explained that if the lab considered employees to be key stakeholders in

the organization, public relations could assist the lab in its internal relationship building because it is the function responsible for stakeholder relationship management.

I suggested the lab implement external public relations models in internal communication programs, such as the CAC or the Envoy Program, which would use interpersonal communication to address perceived divisions among employees. In fact, the lab recently decided to pursue this suggestion in an attempt to improve its employee relationship building. New programs are being designed based on the lab's external communication programs. For instance, the lab plans to implement programs similar to the CAC to give various employee groups the opportunity to develop an internal community and participate in organizational decision making processes (Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2003c). The CEGPA is responsible for the employee communication plan, and a series of focus groups have already been conducted to gather insights into employees' communication needs.

According to a CEGPA manager, (anonymous, personal communication, April 2, 2004), the lab now recognizes the envoys also as internal ambassadors who can be trusted information sources for their peers. She explained that the educational value of the envoy program for employees will be emphasized in the new Envoy Program 2, which is in progress.

Communication Training for Non-managerial Employees

The CEGPA directorate trained its managerial employees in community involvement processes. However, the lab would also benefit from training non-managerial employees in symmetrical principles, especially those who volunteer for

community outreach. The lab could incorporate the introduction of symmetrical cultivation strategies for use with community members into current envoy meetings. This would provide a concrete guideline for the lab's interaction with community members.

Need for Evaluative Research

Although the lab conducted annual community surveys to gather general opinions, I was not able to find documented, evaluative research specific to each of the community outreach programs. I suggest that the practitioners responsible for each program conduct regular, evaluative research on their program. Brief survey research or interviews with community members and employees who volunteer for the programs can be conducted with even a minimal research budget. The results of such evaluation will allow practitioners to systemically improve outreach programs, and offer empirical evidence of the value of each program to the organization.

Internal Promotion of the CEGPA Directorate and Its Activities

I also observed that the added value of CEGPA's activities was unclear to some employees. "[What CEGPA] does is a mystery to all of us," one employee said. She continued, "I honestly don't know what their goals are. The standard scientist here see[s] CEGPA as writing press releases on what happens in science. There is more going on, but people don't see these things." The CEGPA directorate would benefit from a clear explanation of its value as a strategic relationship management function and should promote the results of the programs they implement internally.

Directions for Future Research

As discussed in previous sections, this case study was confined to a non-profit setting in which the bottom-line is not of primary concern. Relationship building processes may be quite different in a for-profit organization. In this sense, in-depth case studies on for-profit organizations may provide new information about employees' roles in public relations processes.

I would like to further explore employees' motivation to participate in community outreach programs in organizations. By conducting focus groups with employee volunteers, I would like to find out more about why they volunteer and what it means to them to volunteer in the community outreach programs. I would also like to determine why other employees do not participate in community outreach activities by conducting focus groups with non-volunteering employees of an organization. Comparative results of the former and the later study could provide further insights into designing successful community outreach programs.

Another course of study would be to conduct quantitative research to explore the correlations among EOR, EPR, and OPR. It would also be interesting to use regression analysis to explore whether the quality of EPR can predict the quality of OPR. Similar analysis could also be done on EOR and OPR. For further theoretical development, these three concepts might be explored using structural equation modeling to refine or confirm the theory suggested in this study.

Further inquiry should be made into participants' perception that they had an OPR when they were involved in organizational issues and were actively seeking information. Using quantitative survey methods, a study could explore the link

between variables in the situational theory. Study of such variables as the levels of involvement and relationship outcomes would provide further insight for the development of relationship theories.

Future study might also involve quantitative research to explore the relationship between the various types of cultivation strategies and resulting relationship outcomes. In this study, symmetrical strategies were found to be effective in developing positive relationships. However, public relations professionals might find guidance for the development of effective communications programs through an exploration of specific cultivation strategies that elicit positive ratings of each of the four relationship dimensions.

Gender issues could also be further explored. In this research, most of the public relations practitioners were women. A practitioner's gender may partially affect his or her ability to use symmetrical cultivation strategies. Further research might also be conducted on the communication behavior of leadership and its impact on relationship building with publics. The following questions could be explored: To what extent does leadership's communication behavior affect public relations outcomes? Or, how important is leadership behavior in building positive relationships with publics?

<div align="center">Concluding Remarks</div>

In this dissertation, I explored the critical roles employees play in the process of building relationships with external publics. I also developed a normative theory of integrative internal and external relationship management.

This case study showed that employee involvement in public relations efforts enables an organization to develop authentic relationships with external publics. Individual interaction between employees and publics creates meaningful experiences for both parties. I also found evidence that employee involvement in public relations contributes to the development of positive internal relationships. In this regard, public relations can be viewed as a means to employee empowerment.

At the outset of the study, I discussed the argument made by scholars in various disciplines that creating synergy between internal and external relationships is critical to the accomplishment of organizational goals. These scholars debated which organizational function should be responsible for creating such synergy. This case study demonstrates that public relations is one organizational function that can significantly contribute to the creation of such synergy through strategic communication management.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF SOLICITATION

Dear Ms./Mr. _____:

My name is Yunna Rhee, a doctoral student from University of Maryland. I am conducting a case study on BNL's community relations practice for a dissertation project. I am interested in how organizations are successfully building relationships with its key stakeholders especially by involving its employees in the process. The study will focus on exploring the critical roles employees play in building positive relationships with the community. I would like to conduct interviews with people like you, who are involved in employee involvement/community relations programs.

I am writing to cordially ask you to participate in this study. The interview will take about 60 minutes. I understand how valuable your time is and the interview sessions can be divided into two 30-minute sessions depending on your wish. I do not intend to interfere with your work and promise that the interview will end on time. As a result of this study, I hope to learn how an organization builds positive relationships with its stakeholders through employee involvement. The responses you give will serve as invaluable information for this research.

All responses will remain strictly confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you can decline to participate at any time. Please also find an "Informed Consent" form attached to this letter. If you decide to participate, please sign the form and send it back to me via mail using the enclosed envelope. You also can give me a verbal or an e-mail consent, and I can collect the actual form from you at the time of interview.

I plan to stay at BNL to conduct interviews starting from May ___ to July ___. I will call you or e-mail you to arrange an interview with you within that time range. You can reach me at following contacts:
e-mail: yrhee@wam.umd.edu or phone: (510)708-9683.

As a token of appreciation, an executive summary of the results will be given to you, upon completion of the study. I believe that it will serve you as a useful reference.

If you have any questions regarding this project, you can contact me or the Principal Investigator, Dr. James. E. Grunig at: e-mail: jg68@umail.umd.edu or Phone: (310) 405-6525

I look forward to your response.
Thank you and sincerely,

Yunna Rhee
Doctoral Student, Department of Communication
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
yrhee@wam.umd.edu
(510) 708-9683

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Identification	Creating synergy among internal and external publics through strategic relationship management: A case study of government organization
Statement of age of participant	I state that I am 18 years of age or older, in good physical health, and wish to participate of in a program of research being conducted by Dr. James E. Grunig and Ms. Yunna Rhee in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland USA 20742-7635
Purpose	The purpose of the research is to explore how an organization can simultaneously build positive relationships with its employees and external publics through use of strategic communication
Procedures	The procedures involve participating in an interview, envisioned to last about 60 minutes, about my experiences with the organization and community members. With my permission, this interview may be audio-taped.
Confidentiality	All information collected in the study will remain confidential, and my name and the name of my organization will not be identified at any time unless I give my consent to reveal these identities. The data I provide will not be linked to my name or organization. I understand that, if applicable, the audiotape of the interview will be kept by the investigators for up to three years before they will be destroyed.
Risks	I understand that there are minimal personal risks associated with my participation and my interview being audio-taped.
Benefits	I understand that the interview is not designed to help me personally but to help devise guidelines for improving community relations programs and employee communication programs of this organization.
Freedom to withdraw and to ask questions	I understand that I am free to ask questions and/or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty and/or decline to answer certain questions.
Name, Address, Phone Number of Principal Investigator	Dr. James E. Grunig Department of Communication, 2112 Skinner Building University of Maryland, College Park, MD USA 20742-7635 Phone: 301-405-6525; E-mail: jg68@umail.umd.edu
Obtaining a copy of the research results	I understand that I may obtain a copy of the results of this research once the research is complete (Jan 2004) by contacting the Principal Investigator listed above or Yunna Rhee (Student Investigator) in the Dept. of Communication, 2130 Skinner Bldg., University of Maryland, College Park, MD USA 20742-7635, phone: 510-708-9683, E-mail: yrhee@wam.umd.edu

Printed Name of Participant   _____

Signature of Participant   _____

Date   _____

☐   Initial here if you agree to have the interview audio taped.

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS[16] INTERVIEW GUIDE

* This guide was used for a semi-structured qualitative interview. During actual interviews, modification of questions or asking new questions during actual interview was necessary. I used this protocol as a guide rather than a strict list of questions to be covered. Probes were used only when the participant's response did not lead to relevant information or when time permitted.

- Thank participant.
- Introduction of researcher and research.
- Ground rules: Explain interview process, confidentiality, informed consent form, and permission for recording.

General Questions

1. What is your position in this organization and what are your responsibilities?

2. When did you join this organization?

Public Relations Excellence

2. How are communication programs for communities developed and implemented? Could you explain the process for me?

> Probes.
> a. What types of research do you conduct? How much research is involved before during, and after a communication program?
> b. How much do you listen to opinions of community publics and in what ways do you do so?
> c. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of your organization's community relations activities?
> d. In your opinion, how does your organization manage positive or negative information that would affect the community? To what extent do you disclose negative information about the organization?
> e. In your opinion, how much does your organization value community's interests as well as the organizational interests?
> f. What are the communication channels or media that your organization uses in its community relations practices?

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[16]   In this study, I investigated community relations practice. To avoid confusion for interviewees, I used the term "members of community" or "community" in place of "external publics." In addition, the term "community relations" was used in place of "public relations."

3. How are communication programs for employees developed and implemented? Could you explain the process for me?

4. How easy is it for employees to express concerns, and do you feel that your organization listens to employees' concerns? In what ways does the organization listen to employees?

> Probes.
> a. What types of research do you conduct? How much research is involved before during, and after an employee communication program?
> b. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of your organization's employee relations activities?
> c. In your opinion, how does your organization manage positive or negative information that would affect the employees?
> d. In your opinion, how much does your organization value employees' interests as well as the organizational interests?
> e. What are the communication channels or media that your organization uses in its employee relations practices?

Organizational Climate

5. How important do you believe it is for the organization to build positive, long-term relationship with its stakeholders? Why do you think so?

6. What are the organizational practices, procedures, rewards that encourage relationship building with the community? Can you think of any examples?

7. In your opinion, to what extent, and how, does such organizational climate affect employees' interaction with community publics?

Relationship Management Theory

8. Who are your most important stakeholders? How do you identify them?

9. Do you feel that your organization has a relationship with the community? More specifically, with whom do you think BNL has developed relationships? Why or why not?

10. In your opinion, what initiated the development of a relationship between your organization and the community groups you mentioned?

11. In your opinion, what characterizes a mutually beneficial relationship?

12. Please describe your organization's relationship with the community groups?

Probes.
a. Control Mutuality: To what extent do you feel the organization has any control over what community groups do that affects the organization? Why?
b. Trust: Would you describe things that community groups have done that indicate it can be relied on to keep its promises, or that it does not keep its promises? How confident are you that community publics have the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?
c. Commitment: Can you provide me any examples that suggest that community groups want to maintain a long-term commitment to relationships with the organization or do not want to maintain such relationships?
d. Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the relationship that the organization has had with community groups? Please explain why you are satisfied or not satisfied.
e. Communal Relationship: Do you feel that community groups are concerned about the welfare of the organization even if it gets nothing in return? Why do you think so? How about your organization? Do you think it is concerned about the welfare of the community? What has it done?
f. Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that community groups give or offer something to the organization because it expects something in return? Can you provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? How about your organization? Does it only want a relationship with community groups if it gets something in return? Can you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship before?

13. Let's talk about things that your organization has done to develop and continue a long-term relationship with community groups. These strategies to cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of community groups. Please provide as many examples as you can.

    Probes.
    a. In your organization, you deal with different types of publics. Are communication strategies tailored to address the different nature of community groups? In what way? Can you give me an example?

14. To what extent do you think different communication strategies to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? What types of strategies do you think are most effective? Can you provide examples of strategies you're your organization or a community group has used that damaged the relationship?

<u>Wrap-Up</u>
Before we end, is there anything that we should have talked about that we did not cover? Is there anything that you would like to add or any questions?

This concludes our interview. Thank you so much for your time. May I contact you (via e-mail or phone) again if I need clarification of what we just have discussed or if I have any other questions?

APPENDIX D

NON-PR EMPLOYEES INTERVIEW GUIDE

* This guide was used for a semi-structured qualitative interview. During actual interviews, modification of questions or asking new questions during actual interview was necessary. I used this protocol as a guide rather than a strict list of questions to be covered. Probes were used only when the participant's response did not lead to relevant information or when time permitted.

- Thank participant.
- Introduction of researcher and research.
- Ground rules: Explain interview process, confidentiality, informed consent form, and permission for recording.

General Questions

1. What is your position in this organization and what are your responsibilities?

2. When did you join this organization?

3. Which community relations program do you participate in? What is your position in the program and what are your responsibilities? When did you start participating in the community relations program?

Organizational Climate

1. How important do you believe it is for the organization to build positive, long-term relationship with its community? Why do you think so?

2. What are the tools, technology, and other resources provided for employees like you who participate in community outreach efforts? What are the rewards? What types of support would you like in place?

Relationship Management Theories

3. Within the community, with whom do you interact with? Could you give me the names of community groups (or individuals)? Is this group (or individuals) important to your organization? Is this group (or individuals) important to you? Why?

4. Do you feel that you have a relationship with the community group (or individuals)? Why or why not?

5. In your opinion, what characterizes a mutually beneficial relationship?

6. Please describe your relationship with the community group (or individuals)?

    a.   In your opinion, what initiated the development of a relationship between you and the community groups (or individuals)?

    b.   Control Mutuality: To what extent do you believe that community members are attentive to what you say? Why? To what extent do you feel you have any control over what community groups (or individuals) do that affect you? Why?

    c.   Trust: Would you describe things that a community member(s) have done that indicates it can be relied on to keep its promises or it does not keep its promises? How confident are you that the community group (or individuals) has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?

    d.   Commitment: Can you provide me any examples that suggest that the community group (or individuals) want(s) to maintain a long-term commitment to a relationship with you or does not want to maintain such a relationship?

    e.   Satisfaction**:** How satisfied are you with the relationship that you have had with community groups (or individuals)? Please explain why you are satisfied or not satisfied.

    f.   Communal Relationship: Do you feel that community groups (or individuals) are concerned about the welfare of you even if they get nothing in return? Why do you think so? How about you? Are you concerned about the welfare of community?

    g.   Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that community groups (or individuals) give or offer something to you because they expect something in return? Can you provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? How about you? Do you only want a relationship with community if it gets something in return? Can you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship before?

7.   Let's talk about things that you have done to develop and continue a long-term relationship with the community groups (or individuals). These strategies to cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of community members. Please provide as many examples as you can.

8.   To what extent do you think different communication strategies to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? What types of communication strategies do you think are most effective? Can you also provide examples of strategies that you used that damaged the relationship?

Synergy among Internal and External Relationships

9.   How would you describe your relationship with the organization?

10. Organizational commitment:
   - What does it mean for you to work for this organization?
   - How much do you identify with your organization's goals and values?
   - Would you be willing to invest extra effort in your work for the organization? Why or why not?
   - How long would you like to maintain your membership with this organization?
   - What would be the consequence of leaving or staying with this organization?
   - Do you feel any sense of obligation to stay with the organization?

   Probes.
   a. Control Mutuality: To what extent do you believe that the organization is attentive to what you say? Why? To what extent do you feel you have any control over what the organization does that affect you? Why?
   b. Trust: Would you describe things that the organization has done that indicate they can be relied on to keep their promises, or that they do not keep their promises? How confident are you that the organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?
   c. Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the relationship that you have had with the organization? Please explain why you are satisfied or not satisfied.
   d. Communal Relationship: Do you feel that the organization is concerned about the welfare of you even if they get nothing in return? Why do you think so? How about you? Are you concerned about the welfare of the organization?
   e. Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that the organization gives or offers something to you because they expect something in return? Can you provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? How about you? Do you only want a relationship with the organization if it gets something in return? Can you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship before?

11. Do you think the quality of relationship you have with the organization affect the way you interact and develop relationships with community members? Why? Or, Why not?

Internal Communication

12. How easy is it for employees to express concerns, and do you feel that your organization listens to your concerns? In what ways does the organization listen to you?

Probes.

a. In your opinion, how does your organization manage positive or negative information that would affect the employees?
b. In your opinion, how much does your organization value employees' interests as well as the organizational interests?
c. What are the communication channels or media that your organization uses in its employee relations practices? What is the most credible source for you?

Communication Competence

13. Can you tell me about your interaction with community members? In what kind of settings do interactions take place? What do you normally talk about in those interactions?

14. Please think of a time when, you had a particularly satisfying (dissatisfying) interaction with a(n) (member of community). When did the incident happen? What specific circumstances led up to this situation? Exactly what did the community member say or do? What did you say or do?

15. To what extent do you think different communication strategies to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? What types of strategies do you think are most effective? Can you provide examples of strategies that you used that damaged the relationship?

16. What did you learn from these interactions and how do you think it affected community members' perception about the organization? What about your own perceptions about the organization?

Wrap-Up

Before we end, is there anything that we should have talked about that we did not cover? Is there anything that you would like to add or any questions?

This concludes our interview. Thank you so much for your time. May I contact you (via e-mail or phone) again if I need clarification of what we just have discussed or if I have any other questions?

APPENDIX E

EXTERNAL PUBLICS[17] INTERVIEW GUIDE

* This guide was used for a semi-structured qualitative interview. During actual interviews, modification of questions or asking new questions during actual interview was necessary. I used this protocol as a guide rather than a strict list of questions to be covered. Probes were used only when the participant's response did not lead to relevant information or when time permitted.

- Thank participant.
- Introduction of researcher and research.
- Ground rules: Explain interview process, confidentiality, informed consent form, and permission for recording.

General Questions

1. Which community organization do you belong to? Could you tell me a little bit about your organization?

2. What is your position in that organization and what are your responsibilities?

3. When did you join that community group or program?

4. For how long have you been involved in BNL's community outreach program(s)?

Relationship Management Theories

1. Would you begin by telling me what are the first things that come into your mind when you hear the name of this organization? What else do you know about it?

2. Do you feel that you have a relationship with this organization? Why or why not?

3. In your opinion, what initiated the development of a relationship between you and the organization?

4. In your opinion, what characterizes a mutually beneficial relationship with an organization like this?

5. Please describe your relationship with the organization?

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[17]   In this study, external publics interviewed are members of community groups who are involved in or participate in community relations programs.

    a.   Control Mutuality: To what extent do you feel you have any control over what the organization does that affects you? Why?

    b.   Trust: Would you describe things that the organization has done that indicate it can be relied on to keep its promises, or that it does not keep its promises? How confident are you that the organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?

    c.   Commitment: Can you provide me any examples that suggest that the organization wants to maintain a long-term commitment to a relationship with you or does not want to maintain such a relationship?

    d.   Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the relationship that you have with the organization? Please explain why you are satisfied or not satisfied.

    e.   Communal Relationship: Do you feel that the organization is concerned about the welfare of the community even if it gets nothing in return? Why do you think so? How about your community? Do you think it is concerned about the welfare of the organization? What has it done?

    f.   Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that the organization gives or offers something to the community because it expects something in return? Can you provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? How about your community? Does your community only want a relationship with the organization if it gets something in return? Can you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship before?

6.   Let's talk about things that the organization has done to develop and continue a long-term relationship with the community. These strategies to cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of the community. Please provide as many examples as you can.

7.   To what extent do you think different communication strategies to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? What types of strategies do you think are most effective? Can you provide examples of strategies that the organization or your community group has used that damaged the relationship?

Synergy among Internal and External Relationships/Communication Competence

8.   Can you tell me about your interaction with employees? In what kind of settings do interactions take place? What do you normally talk about in those interactions?

9. Please think of a time when, you had a particularly satisfying (dissatisfying) interaction with a(n) employee. When did the incident happen? What specific circumstances led up to this situation? Exactly what did the employee say or do? What did you say or do?

10. What did you learn from these interactions and how do you think it affected your perception about the organization?

11. Let's talk about things that these employees have done to develop and continue a long-term relationship with you. These strategies to cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of the community. Please provide as many examples as you can.

12. To what extent do you think different communication strategies used by these employees to cultivate a relationship affect the resulting quality of relationships? Can you provide examples of strategies that these employees have used that damaged the relationship?

13. Do you think the quality of relationship you have with the employees affect the way you relate to the overall organization? Why or why not?

Wrap-Up

Before we end, is there anything that we should have talked about that we did not cover? Is there anything that you would like to add or any questions?

This concludes our interview. Thank you so much for your time. May I contact you (via e-mail or phone) again if I need clarification of what we just have discussed or if I have any other questions?

APPENDIX F

TOP MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

* I used this protocol as a guide rather than a strict list of questions to be asked. Probes were used only when the participant's response did not lead to relevant information and when time permitted.

- Thank participant.
- Introduction of researcher and research.
- Ground rules: Explain interview process, confidentiality, informed consent form, and permission for recording.

General Questions

1. What is your position in this organization and what are your responsibilities?

2. When did you join this organization?

Excellence Theories

1. In your opinion, to what extent does the public relations function contribute to your organizational effectiveness? Are the benefits worth the cost?

2. Do you see public relations more as a way of making money or saving money? What examples can you cite for public relations saving money for the organization?

3. In your opinion, does your organization consider opinions of community members in making organizational decisions that would affect them? If yes, to what extent and how?

4. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of your organization's community relations programs?

Organizational Climate

5. How important is it for the organization to build positive, long-term relationships with its surrounding communities? Why?

Relationship Management Theory

6. Do you feel that your organization has a relationship with the surrounding community? Why or why not?

7. Please describe your organization's relationship with the community?

a. Control Mutuality: To what extent do you feel the organization has any control over what community groups do that affects the organization? Why?

b. Trust: Would you describe things that community groups have done that indicate it can be relied on to keep its promises, or that it does not keep its promises? How confident are you that community publics have the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way?

c. Commitment: Can you provide me any examples that suggest that community groups want to maintain a long-term commitment to relationships with the organization or do not want to maintain such relationships?

d. Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the relationship that the organization has had with community groups? Please explain why you are satisfied or not satisfied.

e. Communal Relationship: Do you feel that community groups are concerned about the welfare of the organization even if it gets nothing in return? Why do you think so? How about your organization? Do you think it is concerned about the welfare of the community? What has it done?

f. Exchange Relationship: Do you feel that community groups give or offer something to the organization because it expects something in return? Can you provide any examples that show why you reached this conclusion? How about your organization? Does it only want a relationship with community groups if it gets something in return? Can you provide examples of how this has happened in the relationship before?

8. Let's talk about things that your organization has done to develop and continue a long-term relationship with community groups. These strategies to cultivate a relationship could be communication strategies, attempts to resolve conflict, or attempts to show concern for the interests of community groups. Please provide as many examples as you can.

9. However, relationships that are built through these programs are often intangible and are not necessarily easy to quantify. What value do these relationships add to the organization?

10. How can you tell you have good relationships with them? What would be appropriate indicators (characterize) of mutually beneficial relationships?

<u>Internal communication</u>

11. How easy is do you think it is for employees to express concerns? Do you feel that your organization listens to employees' concerns? In what ways does the organization listens to employees?

12. In your opinion, how much does your organization value employees' interests as well as the organizational interests?

13. Do you think the quality of relationship employees have with the organization affect the way they interact and develop relationships with external publics?

<u>Wrap-Up</u>

Before we end, is there anything that we should have talked about that we did not cover? Is there anything that you would like to add or any questions?

This concludes our interview. Thank you so much for your time. May I contact you (via e-mail or phone) again if I need clarification of what we just have discussed or if I have any other questions?

CONTACT SUMMARY FORM

Date & Time:

1. People

2. Events or situations that were involved

3. Main themes or issues in the contact; the research questions that the contact most closely addressed

4. New hypotheses/proposition

5. Speculations or guesses about the field situations

6. Where I should place most energy during the next contact

7. What sorts of information should be sought?

RECORDING OF OBSERVATION/CASUAL INTERVIEWS FORM

- Date of observation:
- Time of observation:

Feelings prior to entering the field

Observations and Casual Interviews Record (On-site)

    1. General questions

    2. Observations

        a. Space

        b. Object

        c. Activities/acts

            - Actors

    3. Casual interviews

        a. New contacts?

Feelings during the observation

Feelings upon exiting the field

Reflection, interpretation and analysis (Off-site)

E-MAIL REQUESTING ACCESS

Dear Ms. _____:

Hello, my name is Yunna Rhee, a doctoral student from University of Maryland. I am the advisee of Dr. J. Grunig, who is planning to conduct a study on BNL. I just wanted to introduce myself to you as I am in the process of writing up the proposal for my committee on this project.

As you may already have discussed with Dr. Grunig, I plan to conduct a case study on how BNL is successfully building relationships with its key stakeholders especially by involving its employees in the process. I have been reviewing some of the documents Dr. Grunig provided on your practices and I am very much impressed with your work.

After his recent visit to Brookhaven, Dr. Grunig also informed me about the possibility of conducting a study on the XXX Lab, which is in the vicinity of where I am. I am now considering to conduct a study on XXX Lab as well. I was also excited to find out about the housing options I may be able to have when I am in Brookhaven.

I really look forward to meeting you and starting this project. I plan to submit my proposal by November and hope to get approval from the committee, hopefully within this year.

Please feel free to contact me either via e-mail or phone, If you have any questions. Again, thank you for your interest and help.

Sincerely,
Yunna Rhee.

APPENDIX J

MAJOR RESEARCH EXPENSES

Activity	US Dollars
Travel	
Air Travel	317.5
Train Travel	37
Auto Rental	1104.51 [a]
Gas	72.06
Taxi	30
Lodging	1170 [b]
Digital Recorder	227.3
Recording Equipments	96.1
Voice Recognition Software	68.5
Postage	24
Total	3146.97

[a] $1076.13 was paid for by BNL.

[b] Paid for by BNL.

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