ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE STATUS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LATVIA

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This thesis explores the status of public relations in post-communist Latvia. The study reviews: whether public relations practitioners in Latvia practice J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models of public relations; how former communist propaganda has affected contemporary public relations; and how public relations has contributed to political and economic transformation.

Long-interviews were conducted with ten Latvian public relations practitioners. The findings revealed that the four models of public relations were practiced in Latvia. Communist propaganda affected contemporary public relations. The field of public relations contributed to the political and economic transformation.

This study adds a Latvian perspective to the global theory of public relations. The study also provides practical implications for public relations practitioners by describing the ways political and economic contexts influence the practice of public relations in Latvia.

THE STATUS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LATVIA

by

Baiba Pētersone

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DEDICATION
To my parents

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Latvia has experienced dramatic political and economic changes during the last thirteen years. The country has undergone transformation from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned market economy to a free market economy. These changes have created social implications that have modified the social structure and interaction among social groups in Latvia.

In addition to the political and economic changes, public relations has been one of the most rapidly developing career fields in Latvia since 1991 when the country regained its independence from the Soviet Union. Within the last 13 years several international public relations agencies have opened their offices in Latvia and many local public relations agencies have been established. Jakubovska (2002) found that in 2002 more than 34 public relations agencies provided their services to other organizations. Currently almost every organization employs in-house public relations practitioners and most of the universities offer courses in public relations.

Ławniczak, Rydzak, and Trębecki (2003), who studied public relations in Poland, observed that in Poland the development of contemporary public relations and the economic and political changes occurred simultaneously. The researchers proposed that these changes and the development of public relations could have had an effect on each other.

Latvia witnessed similar political and economic changes to these in Poland. Transformation and the evolvement of public relations occurred simultaneously in Latvia. Despite the political and economic changes and the growth of public relations,

few, if any, studies have been conducted to learn about the status of public relations in Latvia. Therefore, a study exploring public relations in post-communist Latvia was needed.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

After extensive studies of public relations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) concluded that the findings of their research can be applied to other countries. The researchers proposed a need for a global theory of public relations that describes public relations around the world.

Wakefield (1996) observed that public relations needs a "paradigm shift" to reflect the globalization of the field (p. 641). He suggested "strategic public relations [that is] valued among public relations practitioners worldwide" and "specific tactics [that] change from country to country" (p. 641).

A study in Slovenia confirmed that the theory and principles developed in one country are applicable to public relations in other countries. Verčič, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig (1996) discovered that the ten generic principles descriptive of excellent public relations in three Anglo-Saxon countries—the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom—are also characteristic of excellent public relations in Slovenia. The generic principles include:

1. Involvement of public relations in strategic management;
2. Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management;
3. Integrated public relations function;

4. Public relations as a management function separate from other functions;

5. Senior practitioner of public relations in the managerial role;

6. Two-way symmetrical model of public relations;

7. A symmetrical system of internal communication;

8. Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations;

9. Diversity embodied in all roles;

10. Ethics and social responsibility. (pp. 37-40)

The researchers of this study also found that specific applications are necessary to implement those principles in "different settings" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 543). The specific applications include the country's culture, political-economic system, level of development, media system, and the extent of activism (Verčič et al., 1996, p. 40).

The theory about the generic principles and specific applications of those principles suggests that the global knowledge about public relations could also describe public relations in Latvia. Therefore, this study in Latvia is founded on the proposition that public relations theory can be applied globally.

The purpose of this study is not to describe how each generic principle applies to Latvia and how the five specific applications influence the practice of public relations in Latvia. Instead, the purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of public relations in Latvia and to add a Latvian perspective to the global theory of public relations.

This study researches three concepts of public relations. The concepts include, first, models of public relations; second, effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations; and, third, transformation public relations.

Models of Public Relations

J. Grunig (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) proposed four models of public relations. These models are press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. The goal of the press agentry model is publicity and propaganda. The public information model is employed to inform the organization's publics about the organization. The practitioners of the two-way asymmetrical model try to persuade the organization's publics to behave in ways favorable to the organization. The goal of the two-way symmetrical model is to facilitate dialogue between the organization and its publics. Studies in countries such as the United States, India, Taiwan, and Greece (J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Sriramesh, Y. Huang, & Lyra, 1995) have demonstrated that the four models describe the practice of public relations internationally. These findings lead to a conclusion that the four models could be also practiced by public relations practitioners in Latvia.

Effects of Communist Propaganda

The second concept of this study is communist propaganda and its effects on contemporary public relations. Public relations was not practiced in countries under the soviet occupation (Karadjov, Kim, & Karavasilev, 2000; Verčič et al., 1996). The Communist Party controlled all kinds of information. In order to deliver messages from the Party to the masses, communist propaganda was employed.

Western-style public relations only emerged after the changes of political regimes in East Europe.

Several studies have demonstrated that although political regimes changed, communist propaganda continues to influence the ways contemporary public relations is practiced in East Europe. For example, public relations practitioners in Bulgaria manipulate information to reach their public relations goals (Karadjov et al., 2000). The organization's senior management hides information or gives inaccurate representations about the organization to its publics in Estonia (Tampere, 2001). Guth (2000) observed that the former propaganda disseminators acquire the positions of public relations practitioners in the Russian Federation. These findings in other East European countries with similar histories lead to the conclusion that the practice of contemporary publicrelations may also be influenced by communist propaganda in Latvia.

Transformation Public Relations

The third concept of this study is transformation public relations. This concept links public relations and transformation and describes the effects that the two phenomena have on each other.

Ławniczak et al. (2003) found that contemporary public relations in Poland began with political and economic changes. Ławniczak (2001) suggested that contemporary public relations has helped transformational societies "to adopt the mechanisms and institutions of the market economy and democracy" (p. 14).

Poland and Latvia experienced similar political and economic changes. Therefore, Ławniczak's (2001) proposition about the role of public relations during

these changes and the simultaneous developments of public relations and transformation could indicate that these two phenomena have also had an effect on each other in Latvia.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the status of public relations in Latvia. My goal is to learn if J. Grunig and Hunt's (1994) four models of public relations— press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical—are practiced by Latvian public relations practitioners. I also want to study why public relations practitioners in Latvia choose one model over another.

In addition to these two goals, this study also explores if and how the former communist propaganda has affected the practice of public relations in Latvia. The fourth goal of this study is to learn if and how public relations has helped Latvian society to undergo transformation from totalitarianism to democracy and from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy.

Method of the Study

Qualitative interviewing was chosen as the method for this study. The essence of this method is to provide "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) and "rich data" (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995) to "unravel . . . slowly evolving events . . . and learn how the present situation resulted from past decisions and incidents" (p. 51). The purpose of qualitative interviewing corresponds with the goal of this study to understand the development of public relations in the context of political and economic changes in Latvia.

Long interviews (McCracken, 1988) with ten participants were conducted to learn about the phenomenon of public relations in Latvia. Sampling strategies such as snowball, purposeful, and maximum variation were employed in the selection of participants with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and affiliations. The data were collected using open-end questions that allowed the participants to provide in-depth reflections about their experiences and observations. The interviews were analyzed according to the three concepts—public relations models, effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations, and transformation public relations.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is embedded in the need to understand the status of public relations in Latvia where few, if any, studies about public relations have been conducted. Despite the rapid development of the field, my conversations with public relations practitioners and students demonstrate that a discussion about the status of public relations is not frequent and the essence of public relations is often misunderstood. In order to initiate this discussion and to clarify the misconceptions, a study exploring the experiences and observations of Latvian public relations practitioners is necessary. This study also contributes to the global theory of public relations by providing a Latvian perspective that describes public relations in the country's political and economic context.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I do not attempt to describe the overall practice of public relations in Latvia. The small sample of the participants does not allow

generalizations about the field. The findings of the study represent the experiences and observations of the ten participants.

The study describes the experiences of participants practicing public relations in Latvia. Although similar political and economic developments occurred in other post-soviet countries, the findings of this study may not apply to these other countries. The Communist Party had complete power over communication in Latvia; therefore, communist propaganda may have had a more severe impact on public relations in Latvia than in other post-soviet countries that were not part of the Soviet Union.

The process of transformation is still in progress. The study describes experiences of participants up through the year 2004. Further developments of transformation may challenge the current observations and add new aspects to the practice of public relations in Latvia.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

My goal is to find patterns that can lead the future research in Latvian public relations. I also view this study as a contribution to the global body of knowledge about public relations. The Latvian perspective adds a new aspect to this body of knowledge about a region of the world that has been little explored.

I hope that my research also has practical implications. I want to find some principles that can guide public relations practitioners in Latvia. These principles should help to understand the diverse aspects of public relations and ways political and economic contexts influence the practice of public relations in Latvia.

Personal Motivation

My interest in this topic steam from my ethnic background. I am Latvian and obtained my first education in public relations in Latvia. I was taught from the textbooks written by North American and British authors without any reference to how the studies described in the textbooks apply to Latvia's situation. My personal observations led me to a conclusion that other practitioners and students may face a similar lack of literature describing public relations in Latvia. Therefore, I believe that a study focusing on the public relations in this country is necessary to analyze and understand the practice of public relations in Latvia.

Ethical Considerations

This study had been made possible because of the wealth of information that the participants contributed to this thesis. I believe that my obligation as a researcher is to approach the issue of participant confidentiality with the greatest respect. I am aware that Latvia, with a population of 2.8 million people, is a small country. People know each other through professional and personal contacts, and any indiscretion on my part could reveal the identities of the participants. In order to ensure confidentiality, throughout the study I do not identify the names, gender, specific titles, and affiliations of the participants.

The purpose of this study is to learn about the status of public relations in Latvia. Therefore, in order to characterize public relations in Latvia, in addition to personal experiences, the participants shared their general observations about the field. Different participants viewed the same issues from different perspectives. For that reason, the reminder that these observations only represent the personal

experiences of each participant is essential. I do not believe that any study can discover the "absolute truth" about a phenomenon. The observations of the participants only describe their understanding about the field. However, the first-hand public relations experience of the participants allows them to be credible sources about public relations in Latvia.

The function of public relations is not isolated from other professions, organizational functions, and institutions. These other factors influence the ways public relations is practiced and public relations practitioners view their own profession. Throughout the interviews the participants described how they see themselves within a larger system. It is important to remember that these descriptions do not characterize other professions, organizational functions, or institutions. The descriptions only tell the story of the participants and how they see themselves in an overall political, economic, and social context.

Another ethical consideration includes my personal experiences. I have been immersed in the Excellence theory of public relations and believe that the symmetrical model of public relations is the most effective and ethical way to practice public relations. I believe that symmetrical communication is possible in real life and studies in other countries (e.g., L. Grunig et al., 2002; Verčič et al., 1996) have provided evidence for this proposition. However, the purpose of this study is not to invalidate other theories and practical approaches to public relations. I value my participants' contributions to the discussion about the diverse ways to approach the phenomenon of public relations.

Brief History of the Latvian Political Context

The current territory of Latvia was settled by theancient tribes of Balts—Cours, Latgallians, Selians, Semgallians, Baltic Fins, and Livs—starting from 9000 B.C. (Fleija, Kehris, Linkaitis, Laizāns, Kabucis, Markots, Treile, & Kanels, 2000). The German Knights of the Sword and Knights of the Teutonic Order invaded the current territory of Latvia in the 12th century. The knights forcefully Christianized the Balts and acquired their land. A feudal system was established; the local people became peasants and serfs of their German landlords. The German rule continued until the mid 16th century when Sweden and Poland invaded different parts of the current territory of Latvia. During this period the ancient tribes of Balts consolidated and the Latvian language emerged. Sweden and Poland occupied the territory until the late 18th century when it was annexed to the Russian Empire. Despite the other occupying forces, the German landowners maintained their rights and privileges until the early 20th century.

Several factors such as the Russian Revolution of 1917, the unjust feudal system imposed by German landlords, and the Enlightenment movement in Europe inspired the Latvian national self-consciousness. Several Latvian movements such as the *Neo-Latvians* (Jaunlatvieši) and the *New Current* (Jaunā Strāva) emerged in the late 19th century. According to the Latvian Institute (n.d.a, ¶ 13), these movements contributed to the development of national culture—art, literature, theater, and science. The first Latvian language newspaper was published in this period. By the end of the 19th century, "Latvians had all the features of a nation—a common

language, territory, economy, culture and psychological characteristics" (Fleija et al., 2000, p. 59).

On November 18, 1918 Latvia declared its independence. Although the independent state was proclaimed, the former occupying forces did not want to cede their influence. According to Fleija et al. (2000), three hostile forces tried to impede the Latvian independence efforts. These forces included, first, the Bolsheviks who gained power in Russia; second, the local Germans who wanted to maintain their rights and privileges and initially helped the Latvian military forces to fight the Bolsheviks; and third, the supporters of the Russian monarchy who wanted the renewal of the Russian Empire. The Latvian national military forces defeated the Germans and the supporters of the Russian monarchy in 1919. The last battle against the Bolsheviks was won in 1920 when Latvia and Soviet Russia signed a Peace Treaty that guaranteed that Soviet Russia "unreservedly recognizes the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State and voluntarily and forever renounces all sovereign rights . . . to the Latvian people and territory" (Grava-Kreituse, Feldmanis, Loeber, & Goldmanis, 2004, ¶ 1). According to Treijs (2003), Latvia's independence was recognized *de iure* in 1921 and the country was admitted to the League of Nations the following year.

The newly independent Latvia was a parliamentary republic. The legislative power was executed by the Parliament, which elected the president and gave an approval vote for the executive power—the Cabinet of Ministers. The Parliament consisted of members of political parties elected by the citizens of Latvia, including women who had an equal right to participate in the political and social life of Latvia.

The world economic crisis of the 1930s affected Latvia's economy (Fleija et al., 2000). The Parliament that consisted of many small parties could not facilitate growth and prosperity of the country. Latvian people were dissatisfied with many economic hardships. To reform the economy, Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis organized a *coup d'état* in 1934. Without any bloodshed the activities of the Parliament and political parties were suppressed. A new government with legislative and executive powers was formed. The democratic election process was replaced by a new system of appointed local and national state officials. Despite the authoritarian changes, Latvian society was positively disposed toward the new regime. The new government was able to achieve economic and cultural prosperity; "by the end of the 1930's Latvia had become a developed European state with a high level of welfare" (p. 61).

In 1939 the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a Non-Aggression treaty later called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that divided East Europe between the German and soviet spheres of influence (Grava-Kreituse et al., 2004). The treaty included a secret attachment that assigned East Europe, including Latvia, to the soviet sphere of influence. In 1939 the Soviet Union required Latvia to grant soviet military bases on its soil. After the soviet Army's invasion, Latvia lost its independence and was annexed to the Soviet Union. The period from 1940 to 1941 under soviet occupation has often been described as the Year of Terror:

> Bloody terror was unleashed after the change of power. Former government and Saeima [Latvian Parliament] members, public and political figures, officers, members of national organizations and wealthy citizens were arrested

and deported to USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] camps. Many were tortured and shot in the KGB [Committee for State Security's] basements. The greatest mass deportation took place on 14 June, when 20,000 people, including infants, were deported from Latvia [to labor camps in Siberia] in cattle trucks. (Fleija et al., 2000, p. 61)

In 1941 Nazi Germany invaded Latvia, as a result of the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. In the summer of 1941 the Nazi German occupation replaced soviet oppression and the Nazi German terror replaced the soviet terror:

[German] terror was directed against Jews, Gypsies and mentally ill people. In the largest towns Jews were herded into ghettos. Special camps were set up in Rīga [Latvia's capital] and its suburbs. The shooting of Jews and Gypsies began. During the German occupation 65,000 [of] Latvia's Jews were killed. (Fleija et al., 2000, p. 61)

Both occupying powers—German and Soviet—invoked a draft of Latvian men, contrary to international conventions (Kurlovičs & Tomašūns, 2000). Latvian soldiers were forced to fight against each other. However, a large part of these drafted resisted both occupying powers and hoped to restore Latvia's independence. Their hopes never materialized. After the Soviet Union and its Allies—Great Britain, the United States, and France—defeated Nazi Germany, the soviet occupation was renewed in Latvia.

The renewal of soviet occupation resulted in extreme Russification and a new wave of mass deportations started. The soviet deportation and repressions affected 216,000 people or every tenth Latvian; on the single day of March 25, 1949, more

than 43,000 people were deported to Siberia and their properties were nationalized (Fleija et al., 2000). Meanwhile, more than half a million Russian immigrants settled in Latvia. The Russian population grew from 7% in 1935 to 47.7% in 1992. The immigrants did not speak Latvian; therefore, Russian became the language of administration, meetings, record-keeping, and everyday conversations.

The well developed economy and industries of independent Latvia and Latvian work culture allowed Soviet Latvia to become one of the most prosperous parts of the Soviet Union. Many Latvians savored the memories of independence and silently resisted the soviet occupation.

In the mid-1980s Mikhail Gorbachev, the general secretary of the Communist Party, appealed to the conservative members of the Party to open economic restructuring of the Soviet Union. The soviet control over political rights such as freedom of speech became less severe than before. Organizations that opposed the soviet regime started emerging in Latvia. The first such organization, Helsinki-86, was established in 1986. The members of the organization asked the soviet leaders to support Latvia's separation from the Soviet Union. The request of Helsinki-86 was not granted, but this request contributed to the further political developments toward democracy in Latvia. In 1988 the liberal members of the Communist Party established another organization—the *Popular Front* (Tautas Fronte*).* According to Wikipedia (n.d.c), in the beginning the Front required Latvia's autonomy within the Soviet Union. However, in 1989 the Popular Front changed its position requiring Latvia's absolute independence from the Soviet Union. The Front gained broad support from Latvian society.

In 1990 the election of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic's Supreme Council was a crucial element that strengthened the Latvian determination to renew the country's independence. The voters had to choose between the Popular Front and conservative communists who opposed the independence. The Popular Front won the election. On May 4, 1990, the new Supreme Council adopted the Declaration of Independence that announced the renewal of the independent Republic of Latvia.

The conservative communists started organizing opposition to the independence forces. A specially trained soviet militiamen group, OMON, began aggressive attacks against a boarder patrol station between Latvia and Lithuania. In January 1991 OMON invaded the Ministry of the Interior. Unarmed Latvians arrived in Rīga's Dome Square in their trucks and tractors to defend the country's independence. OMON shot several unarmed people, including a high school student. Latvians continued resisting and the soviet leadership had to retreat its forces. In August 1991 while conservative communists attempted to overthrow Gorbachev's government in Moscow, the soviet Army occupied the buildings of the Latvian television and radio, attacked people in Dome Square, and was planning to invade the Parliament. The attempted coup in Moscow failed and on August 21 the soviet Army once more retreated in Latvia. On the same day the Supreme Council of Latvia adopted a law that renewed Latvia's independence (Fleija et al., 2000). The renewed republic of Latvia restored the Constitution adopted by the Latvian Parliament in 1922. The first post-soviet, democratic parliamentary election took place in 1993. The same year the Parliament elected a new president and approved a new government. In 2004 Latvia joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUALIZATION

This chapter of my thesis discusses the three main concepts of this study.

First, I start with the four models of public relations and dimensions that characterize

these models to describe the different approaches to the practice of public relations.

Second, I discuss communist propaganda and how it has affected the ways public

relations is practiced in East Europe. Third, I conclude with the discussion of

transformation public relations and how it relates to the four models of public

relations.

Models of Public Relations

For the purposes of this study public relations is defined as the "management

of communication between an organization and its publics" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984,

p. 6). The further discussion about the first concept—models of public relations—is

based on this definition.

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed four models of public relations—press

agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical—to

describe organizational communication activities. J. Grunig and Hunt characterized

the four models as abstractions and simplifications that help to describe the reality.

Although the four models do not reflect a linear, historic development of public

relations, J. Grunig and Hunt believed that the models can give insights into "the

history of formal public relations" (p. 21).

The first model–press agentry—was developed in the mid-19th century,

following what J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) called "public relations-like activities."

The goal of practitioners of press agentry is propaganda; they "seek attention for their organization in almost any way possible" (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 308).

The second model of public relations is the public information model developed early in the 20th century in response to the attacks of journalists on corporations and government agencies. Organizations hire public relations practitioners as journalists to inform the publics about the organizational activities. The information disseminated is accurate, but in most instances it is favorable to the organization.

The third model of public relations—two way asymmetrical—emerged during World War I. The two-way asymmetrical model is founded on behavioral and social sciences. The purpose of this model is persuasion. Research is used to learn about the attitudes and behaviors of publics in order to manipulate them in a manner that is favorable to the organization.

The fourth model identified by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) is the two-way symmetrical model. Research is used to facilitate understanding and dialogue between the organization and its publics. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) proposed that the two-way symmetrical model is used by organizations that practice excellent public relations. This model is the most ethical model and enhances organizational effectiveness.

J. Grunig (1984) identified two variables—direction and purpose—that describe which model an organization practices. The first variable—direction— distinguishes between one-way and two-way models. Practitioners, who employ the

one-way models, deliver information from the organization to its publics. The one-way models do not include feedback from the organization's publics. Practitioners who practice the two-way models facilitate the exchange of information between the organization and its publics. The second variable—purpose—determines if communication is symmetrical or asymmetrical. The goal of symmetrical communication is dialogue between the organization and its publics, whereas, the goal of asymmetrical communication is persuasion directed towards the publics to behave in ways beneficial to the organization.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) proposed three other variables—organizational culture, potential of the public relations department, and schema for public relations—in order to determine what models of public relations organizations practice. First, Sriramesh, J. Grunig, and Buffington (1992) suggested that organizational culture "consists of the sum of total of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that organize and integrate a group of people who work together" (p. 591). Organizational culture determines the values that influence organizational decision-making, including the decisions regarding the models of public relations that are practiced by the organization (Sriramesh et al., 1992). J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) described a circular relationship between the organizational culture and power. Those who hold power in the organization determine the organizational culture; however, "the organizational culture influences who gains power" (p. 299). J. Grunig and L. Grunig distinguished between closed- and open-system styles of management that influenced the organizational culture. The open-system style of management encouraged symmetrical communication within the

organization; whereas, the closed-system style of management involved asymmetrical communication where "the dominant coalition typically believes that an open, symmetrical system threatens its power" (p. 300).

Sriramesh et al. (1992) classified organizational cultures on a continuum from authoritarian to participative. L. Grunig et al. (2002) described organizations with authoritarian cultures as entities that are closed to any new ideas from their internal and external environments. Decision-making in these organizations is centralized. Different units of the organization have different goals that may be in conflict with each other. Innovations from employees are not encouraged and the organizational hierarchy is very stratified. In contrast, organizations with participative cultures are open to influences from their internal and external environments. Teamwork is valued; the management acknowledges contributions from the employees and the employees respect the management. Departments within the organization cooperate and share similar goals that are consistent with the organization's general mission. J. Grunig (1992) concluded that organizations with authoritarian cultures tend to employ asymmetrical communication, whereas organizations with participative cultures engage in symmetrical communication.

The second variable—potential of the public relations department—includes public relations practitioners' knowledge about the two-way model (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). If public relations practitioners, especially the managers of public relations, have knowledge and training in public relations, these practitioners have a greater potential to practice the two-way symmetrical model than practitioners without knowledge and training. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1989) also discovered that

the greater the potential of the public relations department, the greater the possibility

that the senior public relations person would belong to the dominant coalition of the

organization.

The third variable is a schema for public relations: "The way in which senior

managers define and understand public relations" (J. Grunig & L.Grunig, 1992, p.

301). J. Grunig and L. Grunig suggested that this understanding of public relations

can be deepened; first, if public relations practitioners with knowledge and training in

public relations become a part of the dominant coalition and facilitate understanding

of the use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations among the members

of the dominant coalition. Second, the schema for public relations is deepened if the

members of the dominant coalition take courses and educate themselves about public

relations.

Additional Models

Additional models—personal influence, cultural interpreter, and mixed

motive—have been proposed. Sriramesh (1991) discovered the personal influence

model in India. The goal of the public relations practitioners practicing this model is

to establish personal contacts with journalists and key political actors in order to

achieve communication goals that are beneficial to the organization. Personal

contacts are also employed by public relations practitioners in Taiwan, Greece, and

the United States (J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Sriramesh, Y. Huang, & Lyra, 1995).

A later analysis (J. Grunig et al., 1995) of the personal influence

communication pattern revealed that the practitioners of the personal influence model

are trying to reach the same communication goal—to get attention for their

organization—as were the practitioners of the press agentry model. The practitioners of the personal influence model employ their personal contacts with the key players in the media and politics to get attention for their organization; whereas the practitioners of the press agentry model stage events, puffery, or photo opportunities to achieve the same goal (J. Grunig et al., 1995). Therefore, J. Grunig et al. concluded that the press agentry model already describes the techniques used by the practitioners of the personal influence model. Despite the asymmetrical use of personal influence in India, the authors agreed that personal influence techniques can also be employed to reach symmetrical communication goals, such as establishing long-term relationships with journalists based on mutual trust between public relations practitioners and journalists.

Lyra (1991) discovered that multinational companies in Greece use the cultural interpreter model to explain the local culture to the management of multinational organizations. J. Grunig et al. (1995) found that the cultural interpreter model is just a component of other models. The group of authors (J. Grunig et al., 1995) described the ways cultural interpreting may be used to reach the goals of both the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models. The practitioners of the two-way asymmetrical model may employ cultural interpreting to learn what is acceptable to the publics and then design the organization's message to appeal to these expectations. Cultural interpreting as a component of the symmetrical model can be used to facilitate the understanding between the organization and its diverse publics.

Murphy (1991) proposed the mixed-motive model, combining elements from symmetrical and asymmetrical models in order to integrate the needs of the

organization and its publics. She believed that "purely symmetrical public relations behavior" is impossible because it does not offer rational solutions to real life situations (p. 118). Murphy considered that most of the public relations activities fall in the middle of the asymmetrical and symmetrical continuum. She suggested that the organization should find ways of integrating the organization's interests and those of the publics by "bring[ing] conflict and cooperation into fruitful balance" (p. 118).

L. Grunig et al. (2002) counter-argued that the symmetrical model is not "advocating pure cooperation" or "total accommodation of public interests" (p. 309). The symmetrical model integrates both the interests of the organization and publics, and, therefore, the symmetrical model is what Murphy described as the mixed-motive model. L. Grunig et al. described the essence of symmetry as "values that reflect a moral obligation to balance the interests of an organization with the interests of publics with which it [organization] interacts in society" (p. 306). A more detailed discussion about the symmetrical model follows in the next section which reviews the four dimensions of public relations.

Dimensions of Public Relations

L. Grunig et al. (2002) proposed that although the four models—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical—have described how various organizations practice public relations, "a more comprehensive theory that goes beyond the typology represented by the four models" is needed (p. 348). They suggested four dimensions of public relations that describe the typology. These dimensions are symmetry versus asymmetry, one-way versus two-way communication, mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics.

First, the dimension of symmetry versus asymmetry characterizes the extent to which the organization engages in collaboration and advocacy. The more organization values collaboration, the more symmetrical are its communication programs.

The second dimension—one-way versus two-way—describes the direction of the organization's communication programs. One-way communication occurs from the organization to its publics, whereas two-way communication includes mutual exchange of information between the organization and its publics.

The third dimension describes what form of communication—mediated versus interpersonal—the organization uses to communicate with its publics. Public relations practitioners who employ one-way models such as press agentry and public information tend to use mediated communication to reach their communication goals, whereas practitioners who practice two-way models are most likely to use interpersonal forms of communication. However, all four models can use both mediated and interpersonal forms of communication

The fourth dimension is ethics. This dimension describes the extent to which the practice of public relations is ethical. Although L. Grunig et al. (2002) wrote that the two-way symmetrical model is "inherently ethical," they also said thatthe other three models can be practiced in an ethical manner (p. 349).

The Excellence team (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier) found that in general the press agentry model is asymmetrical, one-way, unethical, and characterized by mediated communication. The public information model is also asymmetrical and one-way; mediated communication is the most often used form of communication.

However, this model is more ethical than press agentry. The two-way asymmetrical model is a two-way model that is asymmetrical and can be practiced ethically and unethically and can employ both forms of communication—mediated and interpersonal. The two-way symmetrical model is symmetrical, two-way, ethical, and includes mediated and interpersonal forms of communication.

Dozier with L. Grunig and J. Grunig (1995) proposed the contingency model that is based on the asymmetrical versus symmetrical dimension. The contingency model includes a continuum with the organizational position on one end and the public's position on the other end. Both extremes are asymmetrical; if the organizational interests dominate, the interests of the publics are not satisfied and vice versa. In the middle of the continuum the authors proposed the win-win zone where the interests of the publics and the organization are integrated. Dozier et al. (1995) wrote that the win-win zone represents the symmetrical model; "organizations and publics are viewed as having separate and sometimes conflicting interests. Nevertheless, negotiation and collaboration make it possible for organizations and publics to find common ground in the win-win zone" (p. 356-357). Dozier et al. found that because the symmetrical model includes conflicting interests, negotiation, and collaboration, the symmetrical model is the mixed-motive model.

Critique about the Symmetrical Model of Public Relations

Murphy (1991) and other scholars (e.g. Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Van der Meiden, 1993) argued that the symmetrical model of public relations is a normative model that is practically impossible. L. Grunig et al. (2002) counter-argued by providing evidence from J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (1989) extensive review of studies

that explored the practice of the four models. These studies demonstrated that the four

models, including the symmetrical model, are practiced in real-life. J. Grunig and L.

Grunig concluded that these studies confirmed that the four models are positive

models, i.e., models that describe how public relations is actually practiced in

organizations.

Several authors (e.g., Leichty, 1997; Leichty & Springston, 1993; Miller,

1989; Murphy & Dee, 1996; Van der Meiden, 1993) argued that the practice of the

two-way symmetrical model would imply setting aside the organization's "self-

interest" to accommodate the interests of the publics (Van der Meiden, 1993). These

authors believed that the two-way symmetrical model is unrealistic. L. Grunig et al.

(2002) responded to this argument by explaining that "the concept of symmetry

implies a balance of the organization's and the public's interests. Total

accommodation of the public's interests would be as asymmetrical as unbridled

advocacy of the organization's interests" (p. 314).

Karlberg (1996) believed that most of the current public relations research

describes the practice of public relations on behalf of powerful business and

government organizations. Although he admitted that the two-way symmetrical

model "contains valuable insights and prescriptions and is undoubtedly an ethical and

responsible step forward" (p. 272), Karlberg suggested that "the resource-poor

segments of the population" lack the communication skills and resources to realize

"communicative symmetry" (p. 273). Karlberg pointed out three obstacles that

prevented less powerful groups from practicing "communicative symmetry." First,

many citizens do not know how media organizations operate and how these

organizations can be accessed. Second, even if the citizens knew how media organization operated and how these media organizations could be accessed, the citizens still would not be able to make use of this access because they lacked resources to access the media. Third, citizens, who do not have skills and resources to communicate symmetrically, are afraid that they will be ignored by media organizations if they do not engage in behaviors that are "extreme and confrontational" (p. 274).

Dozier and Lauzen (2000) also criticized the symmetrical model by saying that because of the power inequality, the organizations "with deep pockets" do not need to engage in communication with activists (p. 12). The authors indicated that "the Excellence Model does not fully address the separate issues of powerless publics and irreconcilable differences" between the powerful organizations and powerless publics (p. 12). The resourceful organizations can ignore the publics that lack resources to conduct excellent public relations. Furthermore, Dozier and Lauzen believed that organizations and activist groups have different goals and "the very existence of an organization and its behavior are unacceptable to an activist public" (p. 12). Therefore, the win-win solutions advocated by the Excellence study are not satisfactory for activist groups. Activist groups are not loyal to one organization, but to "a larger social movement or 'cause'" (p. 14).

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) disagreed by indicating that generic principles of symmetrical public relations are the same for activist groups and organizations, but activist groups "must apply the principles differently when specific conditions are different" (L. Grunig et al., 2002, p. 329). J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) described

how activist groups can minimize the power imbalance. First, they suggested activist groups to plan their public relations activities strategically and build coalitions with other activist groups that share similar interests. Second, the new coalitions should try to engage the organizations that are the sources of the problems in symmetrical communication. Third, if the organizations do not respond to symmetrical communication, the activist groups can turn to asymmetrical techniques such as media advocacy, litigation, legislation, and regulation. Fourth, once the organizations are aware of the problem and are willing to find mutually beneficial solutions, the activist groups should return to symmetrical communication with the organizations and search for win-win solutions.

International Applications of the Four Models

Studies in countries other than the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have confirmed that the four models of public relations—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical—can be applied internationally. Verčič, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig (1996) found that all models, including the symmetrical model of public relations, are practiced in Slovenia. Lyra (1991) found that although all models of public relations are practiced in Greece, the press agentry model dominates. The communication goals of public relations activities in Greece are publicity. Public relations practitioners in Greece lacked the skills to conduct research; therefore, they can not engage in two-way communication with their publics. Two studies—Sriramesh's (1991) in India and Karadjov, Kim, and Karavasilev's (2000) in Bulgaria—also revealed that publicity dominates over advanced models of public relations such as two-way asymmetrical and two-way

symmetrical. In these two countries the two-way models are not practiced because of public relations practitioners' lack of knowledge about ways to conduct research. Sriramesh (1991) also found that in India the organizations' senior managements does not support the function of public relations.

Y. Huang's (1990) study in Taiwan discovered that all four models of public relations are practiced, but the use of a model changes after the country's political regime changes. She conducted a case study involving a government owned corporation that tried to get approvals from the government to construct a nuclear power plant. The study explored the corporation's public relations activities across a longer time period—first, when Taiwan was under an authoritarian regime; second, when the political regime liberalized and the first activists emerged; and third, when martial law was lifted in Taiwan. The study revealed that during the authoritarian regime the press agentry model was used to disseminate biased information that was favorable to the corporation. During the second time period, with a less authoritarian regime and the first traces of activism, the corporation tried to educate the publics by using the public information model. Finally, when martial law was lifted, the corporation used the two-way asymmetrical model by trying to convince its publics to support the construction of the nuclear plant. Y. Huang also observed that the corporation tried to use the two-way symmetrical model, but the practice of this model was not possible because the activists did not trust the corporation; the activists believed that the corporation had bribed the government officials in the past to obtain the necessary approvals for the construction of the nuclear power plant. The findings of the case study led Y. Huang to conclude that participative political regimes

increase the ability of public relations practitioners to implement the two-way models. Rhee (2002), who studied public relations and the effects of culture on public relations in South Korea, discovered a similar relationship between political regimes and public relations. In 1970s, under an authoritarian government, South Korean organizations practiced the press agentry model to avoid criticism and negative coverage about the organizations. When the political regime democratized and the first activist and social interest groups emerged, Korean organizations started practicing advanced forms of public relations.

Although I am unaware of any studies that have been done in Latvia, the above described evidence from other countries (e.g., Karadjov et al, 2000; Lyra, 1991; Sriramesh, 1991; Verčič et al., 1996) suggests that the four models of public relations—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical—may be practiced in Latvia. Therefore, I propose my first two research questions about the four models of public relations. I also propose four sub-questions about the four dimensions of public relations that characterize the use of public relations models. These dimensions are asymmetry versus symmetry, one-way versus two-way communication, mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics.

RQ1: What, if any, model or models of public relations are practiced in Latvia?

RQ1a: How, if at all, does the dimension of asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication describe the practice of public relations in Latvia?

RQ1b: How, if at all, does the dimension of one-way versus two-way communication describe the practice of public relations in Latvia?

RQ1c: How, if at all, does the dimension of mediated versus interpersonal communication describe the practice of public relations in Latvia?

RQ1d: How, if at all, does the dimension of ethics describe the practice of public relations in Latvia?

RQ2: Why do public relations practitioners choose one model over another?

Public Relations in East Europe

Pētersone (2002), in her literature review about the status of public relations in East Europe, found two characteristics that seem unique to the region. First, the practice of public relations is influenced by the former propaganda tradition. Second, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, public relations had to support transformation from a totalitarian regime to democracy and from a communist planned economy to a free market economy.

Propagandistic Approach to Public Relations

In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party had absolute power over all channels of information. Hopkins (1970) wrote that Lenin believed that the purpose of freedom of the press was to "deceive, corrupt, and fool the exploited and oppressed mass of the people" (p. 55). Hachten and Scotton (2002) proposed that the Communist Party manipulated the press "to instruct the masses and lead the proletariat" (p. 155). Free exchange of information threatened the Communist Party. To maintain status quo, propaganda was used.

Inkeles (1950), who studied the formation of public opinion in the Soviet Union, defined communist propaganda as "organized, systematic, concerted campaigns to change the attitudes and influence the actions of large social groups" (p. 3). He wrote that any form of communication was under the scrutiny of the state. Communication was centrally directed with a purpose of ensuring "a high degree of [informational] uniformity in form and content" (p. 6).

Schramm (1955) identified five characteristics that described the foundation of communist propaganda. First, a clear doctrine was ingrained in all soviet leaders; they were "trained to think and talk in a Marxist vocabulary" (p. 105). The second element was the importance of the mass; "the mass represented the greatest reservoir of energy" (p. 105). The third element was the Communist Party that guided masses and exercised "strict control" (p. 106). The fourth element was the nature of the party; "the party must submit to the dictatorship of its central bureaucracy and leaders" (p. 106). The pattern of progress was the fifth element of communist propaganda; "the task of propaganda [was] to demoralize the enemy, strengthen the confidence of the party, and then, when power is gained, to maintain proper orientation of the masses" (p. 107).

Although propaganda was widespread, the field of public relations that is founded on the free exchange of information did not exist in the soviet bloc countries. Karadjov et al. (2000) wrote that until the collapse of communism public relations was not practiced in East Europe; "any notion of dissent or mere attempts at alternative thinking were quickly suppressed, and therefore, no public discussions or anything of substance was possible at all" (p. 210).

Scholz (1998) compared political communication with "one-way political propaganda carried out through the mass media" in the German Democratic Republic. She believed that the Socialist Unity Party used "the media . . . [as] instruments for the ideological manipulation of its citizens" (p. 35). Bentele and Peter (1996) also found that "objectivity in reporting was defined in partisan terms" (p. 356). Scholz (1998) wrote that although the term "Öffentlichkeitsarbeit" (used for public relations in the German Democratic Republic) was also used in the German Democratic Republic, this term was "embedded in the ideological framework of the Socialist Unity Party" (p. 37). Öffentlichkeitsarbeit did not represent "an open and dialogical communication between groups in society" (p. 37).

Verčič et al. (1996) argued that propaganda does not involve communication, but "discommunication" (p. 42). Propaganda "dissolves communication between people in order to disable their ability to form publics" (p. 42). Propaganda is used as a tool to disseminate "information about the constraints that a system places on lateral communication" (p. 44).

Although the absolute control of information ceased to exist after the collapse of the Soviet Union, several authors (Guth, 2000; Karadjov et al., 2000; Tampere, 2001; Taylor, 2000) have observed the impact of the propaganda tradition on contemporary public relations in East Europe. Karadjov et al. (2000), for example, found that public relations practitioners in Bulgaria use manipulation of information as their main public relations strategy. They devote a disproportionately large effort to media relations. Trębecki (2001) found similarities in Poland. Scholz (1998) observed that in East Germany public relations practitioners also focus on media

relations and image-building that is achieved through the media because they lacked knowledge about other forms of communication. She attributed this lack of knowledge to the absence of formal public relations education in the former German Democratic Republic. Taylor's (2000) research in Bosnia revealed that in order to ensure the actual appearance of announcements in the media, non-governmental organizations had to pay for such topics as the introduction of new community services, forums for political candidates, educational activities, and cultural programs.

Several authors (Guth, 2000; Hiebert, 1994; Karadjov et al., 2000; Lucas-Bachert, 1991; Tampere, 2001) have indicated that after the collapse of communism, East Europe lacked experienced and educated public relations practitioners. The vacuum was filled by the former propaganda disseminators. Guth (2000) found that although the political systems changed, the main players, who had organizational resources and the necessary skills, remained the same. Their former training as communist propaganda disseminators helped them to acquire positions of power and to influence the way public relations was practiced in independent East European countries.

Scholars from other disciplines observed a similar phenomenon. Pine and Bridger (1998), who researched the transition to liberal democracy in East Europe, wrote, "in many instances, old power structures have reappeared under new names and the same individuals may well wield influence under new guises" (p. 9). Domanski (2000), who studied social stratification in East European countries, also alluded to the "conversion of members of the former communist nomenclature into owners of [private] firms" (p. 5).

Tampere (2001), who analyzed the impact of communist propaganda on public relations in Estonia, labeled the phenomenon as a propagandistic approach to public relations. She wrote:

> In post communist society, particularly at the early stage of transition, the public communication of an organization takes place proceeding from the old Soviet traditions – a "secret" worldview dominates and actual communication is minimal. If a message is sent to the public it is usually propagandistic and serves the interests of the management giving an inadequate representation of what is actually happening in the organization. (p. 210)

The neighboring countries of Estonia and Latvia have both experienced the absolute power of the Communist Party, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent development of the field of public relations. The similar histories of both countries may indicate that the propagandistic approach to public relations is also present in Latvia. Therefore, the third research question is:

> RQ3: How, if at all, does former communist propaganda influence the practice of public relations in Latvia?

Transformation Public Relations

The second characteristic (Pētersone, 2002), in addition to the propagandistic approach to public relations, that characterizes East European public relations is its transformational nature. Ławniczak, Rydzak, and Trębecki (2003) found that in Poland, contemporary public relations started with the political and economic transitions.

Bridger and Pine (1998) defined the term "transition" as "a temporary state between two fixed positions, a movement between the point of departure and that of arrival" (p. 3). However, Bryant and Mokrzycki (1994), who analyzed political and economic changes in East Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, said that "transformation" is a more descriptive term. They believed that transition has a set goal, whereas transformation has "the emphasis on actual process" (p. 4). Also, Stark (1992), who analyzed privatization processes in East Europe, described the term "transformation" as continuously changing process; transformation is "the introduction of new elements . . . most typically in combination with adaptation, rearrangement, permutations, and reconfigurations of already existing institutional forms" (p. 22).

Domanski (2000), Offe (1991), and Bryant and Mokrzyski (1994) argued that transformation in East Europe did not only involve political changes from communism to democracy, but also economic processes. These processes included the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the introduction of the concepts of "private ownership" and a "free market" (Domanski, 2000).

Ławniczak et al. (2003) considered public relations "an important and useful instrument that facilitated and accelerated the political and economic transition" (p. 259). Ławniczak (2001) proposed so-called "transition public relations" or "public relations performed in the transition economies" (p. 8). According to Ławniczak, the goal of transition public relations is "to help to introduce and adopt the mechanisms and institutions of the market economy and democracy in former command economies" (p. 14).

Ławniczak (2001) identified six main activities of public relations during the transition. First, the goal of public relations activities in state-run enterprises is "to secure the acceptance among workers and society at large for necessary restructuring and possible privatization" (p. 15). Second, the goal of public relations in privately owned businesses is "to secure publics acceptance for the concept of private property" (p. 16). The third goal of public relations is to encourage the public to use such "new" market economy institutions as the stock exchange, banks, and national investment funds. Fourth, public relations must help foreign companies to gain public acceptance for their investments. Fifth, public relations must be employed to attract potential foreign investors. The sixth goal of public relations is to promote the country abroad by "secur[ing] the support of international financial institutions, attract[ing] foreign capital, and achiev[ing] acceptance for attempts to integrate with the West within existing supranational structures" (p. 16).

Critique about Transitional Public Relations

Ławniczak (2001) used the term "transition public relations" to describe public relations activities after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As I indicated earlier, scholars who studied the political and economic changes in East Europe believed that transition emphasizes destination but falls short of explaining of how changes happened, and it does not reflect any unexpected occurrences during the process. "Transformation" is a better term to use because the end state of the changes in East Europe is unknown.

Ławniczak's (2001) description of transitional public relations was very asymmetrical; the information was delivered from the government or corporations to

the society. The transitional public relations did not reflect any interactivity and reciprocity between the government or corporations and the different groups of the society. When Ławniczak listed the six main activities of public relations during the process of transition, the activities were described in a one-directional manner. A few examples were: "to secure an acceptance among workers and society . . . [for] restructuring and possible privatization;" "to secure public acceptance for the concept of private property;" "to encourage the public to use their services;" and "to gain public acceptance for foreign capital" (pp. 16-17). These descriptions led to the conclusion that the state and newly privatized enterprises had set goals; the society was not engaged in a dialogue about what these goals were or the ways these goals could be reached.

Furthermore, transformation also had broader social implications than just political and economic changes. Transformation broadened social inequalities among different groups in the society and caused unemployment and a loss of retirement and health guarantees (Cox & Mason, 1999). Cox and Mason found that those who were able to adjust to the new situations acquired wealth through privatization, whereas some other groups that lacked opportunities and abilities became unemployed and impoverished. Cox and Mason warned that this conflict among groups in the society may result in an "increasingly explosive situation where social divisions are becoming wider and more obvious" (p. 201).

Kaur (1997), who studied public relations and privatization in Malaysia, borrowed the concept of "externalities" from the theory of economics to describe the positive and negative effects that privatization had on society at large. She described

externalities as "the value of all effects, positive and negative, resulting from a business activity" (p. 70). The examples of negative externalities include congestion, pollution, and higher pricing of goods; positive externalities are lower costs and availability of goods and services (p. 70). Kaur believed that the role of public relations in newly privatized organizations in Malaysia was to assist these organizations to "manage the negative externalities resulting from privatization for its strategic publics to establish and maintain its competitive positions" (p. 73). Verčič and J. Grunig (1995) also suggested that externalities affect "the competitive advantage" of businesses. The interest of the business is to increase positive externalities and reduce the negatives.

The concept of externalities permits one to view the negative social implications of the economic transformation in East Europe as externalities or by-products of transformation. Transformation public relations based on symmetrical communication can be a good tool to reduce negative externalities associated with the social tension among the groups of the society and to increase positive externalities such as mutual understanding among these groups. Public relations practitioners can reach these goals through issues management (J. Grunig, 1992) and boundary spanning (White & Dozier, 1992). According to L. Grunig at al. (2002), issues management is the "proactive process of anticipating, identifying, evaluating, and responding to public policy issues that affect organizations and their publics" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 16); whereas, the public relations practitioners who perform the boundary spanning function "interact with the organization's environment

and . . . gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition" (White & Dozier, 1992, p. 93).

The process of East European transformation also has had international implications or externalities. Lavigne (1999) found that transformation changed the structure and mission of such international organizations as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); it increased the responsibilities of financial institutions such as the European Community. Transformation caused the shift of direct foreign investments from developed economies in the West to East Europe, and the cheap production costs in East Europe reduced the demand for products made in the West, particularly in industries such as agriculture and steel-making.

Similar to the processes of transformation, transformation public relations should not be limited only to the East European region. The changes in the international structures and East European efforts to join such organizations as the European Union and NATO created the need for international communication. The Eastern European governments and organizations were required to interact with foreign governments, organizations, and international institutions such as the European Union, the United Nations, NATO, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. J. Grunig (1993) proposed that, in today's world, governments and other organizations need to engage in public diplomacy–"the application of public relations to strategic relationships of organizations with international publics" (p. 143).

Yoder (2000) found that one of the most essential tasks that Europe faced after the collapse of communist regimes was the need to integrate East and West

European societies. She believed that the unification of Germany was a preview of the future processes that would take place when many East European countries joined the European Union. She suggested that a direct transplantation of Western institutions and market economies in the former East Germany would not be effective. The East German society needed to make "sociocultural adjustments" (p. 115), i.e., accept the changes in workplace, educational curriculums, employment, retirement policies, and so forth.

Yoder's (2000) findings revealed that East Germans and West Germans had separate identities. East Germans did not identify themselves as Germans, but as East Germans. She discovered that the basis for the separate identities was the different political and economic orientations of East and West Germans. Yoder distinguished between the "Old Politics" in East Germany and "New Politics" in West Germany (p. 121). She wrote that East Germans "tend to hold more Old Politics positions, demonstrating more classic concerns, such as material security, (re)industrialization, and building-up the infrastructure, as opposed to such New Politics concerns as environmental protection, gender equality, and self actualization (pp. 121-122).

Yoder (2000) believed that the encroachment of Western values "could have serious implications for building trust in the new system" (p. 134). These differences between East and West Europe need to be considered when public relations is practiced. J. Grunig and Y. Huang (2000) emphasized that trust is an essential part of excellent public relations; "trust highlights one's confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 44). Therefore, the role of transformation public relations is to build trust among East and West European societies in order to secure

integration that is based on mutual respect of both East and West European values and norms.

Scholz (1998), who studied public relations and culture in East Germany, found that some East German values such as collectivism, cooperation, and relationship building have a greater "potential for symmetry" in public relations than West German values such as individualism and competition (p. 118). She believed that East German practitioners should maintain these values, which describe excellent public relations.

After the collapse of communism, Latvia also experienced political, economic, and social transformations. The regained independence opened the door for international communication, and Latvia joined the European Union in May of 2004. Therefore, based on the evidence that public relations assisted other East European societies to cope with political and economic changes during the transformation, I proposed the fourth research question:

RQ4: How, if at all, does transformation public relations apply to public relations activities in Latvia?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Value of Qualitative Research

The purpose of this study is to understand the status of public relations in Latvia through the eyes of Latvian public relations practitioners. Therefore, I believe that qualitative inquiry is the most appropriate approach to explore this phenomenon. Potter (1996) wrote: "The qualitative approach provides an enormously useful variety of means for examining how humans make sense out of their world" (p. 12). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also suggested that the purpose of qualitative research is to understand "how humans infuse their actions—and the world that results– with meanings" (p. 5). I believe that my choice of the qualitative approach that provides "detailed descriptions of human experience, dialogic encounters between self and other, and the inductive development of theory from intimate knowledge of situated practice" allows me to understand how public relations practitioners in Latvia assign meaning to their profession and what this assigned meaning is (p. 28).

Because the field of public relations has been little studied in Latvia, individual public relations practitioners with unique experiences and direct involvement in the field are the most credible sources regarding public relations in Latvia. A quantitative approach to public relations in Latvia would not have allowed capturing "diversity among people . . . and how [each human] creates meaning . . . from a different set of experiences" (Potter, 1996, p. 27).

Research Method

I chose qualitative interviewing as the research method for this study. Bingham and Moore (1959) described qualitative interviewing as a conversation with a purpose. According to H. Rubin and I. Rubin (1995), the qualitative interview is the most appropriate method when the purpose of the study is to "unravel . . . slowly evolving events . . . and learn how present situations resulted from past decisions or incidents" (p. 51). The goal of this study–to find out how the field of public relations developed in Latvia and how the field has been affected by the former communist propaganda and the processes of transformation–corresponds with the purpose that H. Rubin and I. Rubin ascribed to qualitative interviewing. In addition to the goals stated above, I choose interviewing as my method because it provides "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) and "rich data" (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995, p. 56) to describe the phenomenon under study.

McCracken (1988) suggested using long interviews if the purpose of the study is to provide knowledge about "cultural categories and shared meanings" (p. 7). For this study, I conducted long interviews to learn how public relations practitioners in Latvia describe the field of public relations and assign meaning to occurrences in the field.

Participants

I selected ten participants for this study. McCracken (1988), who suggested a sample size of eight, considered that it is essential to work in-depth with fewer participants than superficially with many. My initial plan was to select eight participants following McCracken's suggestion. However, later in the study I added

two additional participants to reach what H. Rubin and I. Rubin (1995) called "saturation"–the point at which few new findings are revealed. Although similar patterns and categories emerged among the first eight participants, the two additional participants confirmed these patterns and categories and added new experiences about public relations in Latvia.

The participants were selected based on the combination of the following three sampling strategies: snowball, purposeful, and maximum variation. First, Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) described *snowball sampling* as a strategy that yields participants through referrals that are "made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (p. 141). Second, according to Schwandt (1997), the objective of the *purposeful sampling* strategy is to select participants because "there may be a good reason to believe that what goes on there is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to test or elaborate some established theory" (p. 122). Third, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) said that the goal of the *maximum variation sampling* is to explain different forms of the same phenomenon. To reach this goal, the researcher needs to select participants with dissimilar experiences and qualities. These differences reflect the diversity of the subject under study.

I used the purposeful sampling strategy to select two of the participants. These two participants are my former classmates from the Vidzeme University in Latvia. They are among the first practitioners of public relations who have formal education in the field and who have taken part in the development of the field in Latvia. To avoid biases that may be related with education obtained from the same institution, I

also used snowball and maximum variation sampling. Using snowball sampling, I

asked my former classmates to suggest their colleagues and fellow practitioners of

public relations who have different educational backgrounds. The final selection of

participants was based on maximum variation sampling, so that practitioners from

different organizations and public relations agencies with various experiences are

represented in this study. The participants include both women and men employed by

private- and public-sector organizations and public relations agencies. All of the

participants were employed in the position of senior public relations manager in their

organizations at the time of the interviews.

I e-mailed 13 public relations practitioners a description of the study and

asked them to participate. A copy of this e-mail of solicitation is included as

Appendix A. Ten of the practitioners agreed to participate. One of them did not

respond and the remaining two could not participate because of other professional

commitments.

Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained through 20 open-ended questions that

are included in the interview protocol (Appendix B). The interview protocol was

arranged around the three main concepts of this study—the four models of public

relations, effects of communist propaganda on public relations, and transformation

public relations.

The first group of questions about the four models of public relations asked

the participants to explain what public relations means to them and what kind of

public relations programs they work with. The participants were asked to describe the

planning process of public relations programs and the organizations' research activities. The first group of questions also asked participants to describe the organizations' publics and development of the field since the participants started practicing public relations in Latvia.

The second group of questions explored if and how communist propaganda has affected contemporary public relations in Latvia. I asked the participants to describe how they understood the concept of "communist propaganda" and if they have personally experienced the effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations.

The third group of questions investigated whether public relations has helped society in Latvia to transform from totalitarianism to democracy and from a centrally planned market economy to a free market economy. Questions about the role of public relations as an eliminator of the negative social implications of the transformation were also asked.

At the end of each interview I asked if there was additional information that the participants would like to share about public relations in Latvia. The answers to this question helped me to supplement my study with data that I would not have obtained through the first 19 questions.

The interview questions were pre-tested with two public relations practitioners in Latvia. The interview protocol was adjusted according to the changes suggested by these two practitioners. In addition to the 19 interview questions, I also inquired if there was any additional information that the participants would like to add, but that I did not ask about, in order to ensure the comprehensibility of the findings.

Despite the pre-tests, I had to make one more change in the interview protocol after the first five interviews. I eliminated questions number eight and nine. These questions asked the participants to read the descriptions of the four models of public relations and state which model they practiced. Each of the five participants answered that he or she practiced the two-way symmetrical model. However, their answers to the other 18 questions indicated that the press agentry, public information, and two-way asymmetrical models were employed much more frequently than the symmetrical model of public relations. The conflict between the participants' answers to questions eight and nine, and the other 18 questions led me to the conclusion that, because of the description that characterized the two-way symmetrical model as a model with high ethical standards, the participants gave me socially desirable answers.

The interviews occurred during a three-week period in Latvia in 2004. All interviews were conducted at the participants' offices. I asked the participants to share their personal experiences and observations about the field of public relations. I initially planned to conduct two 90-minute face-to-face interviews with each participant. However, the length of the interviews was shortened if the participants had other professional or personal obligations and could not devote the full 180 minutes to this study. In those cases, when I discovered that I was missing essential information or something was unclear, I revisited my participants later in the process of data analysis.

Each interview was audio tape-recorded for accuracy. I also took notes during the interviews to reflect on such non-oral aspects as the participant's office, artifacts that were present during the interview, and other observations.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the tape-recorded interviews. The transcripts allowed me to detect emerging themes within each individual interview and compare the themes among the interviews.

I analyzed the data according to the three theoretical concepts that were described in the conceptualization part of this proposal. These concepts include the four models of public relations–press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two way symmetrical; effects of communist propaganda on public relations; and transformation public relations. I reduced data based on the relevance to the theoretical concepts and my research questions. If new, unexpected data that were essential to describe the field of public relations in Latvia emerged after the interviews, I added them to my final report to ensure a complete description of my findings.

During the data analysis, the transcripts were coded. I followed the coding process suggested by H. Rubin and I. Rubin (1995), i.e., I set up four major coding categories and five subcategories; and I "mark[ed] each word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or example that belong[ed] in each coding category" in the transcribed text (p. 241). The four major coding categories were, first, the models of public relations; second, effects of communist propaganda on public relations; third, transformation public relations; and, fourth, additional characteristics that described public relations

in Latvia but did not belong to any other category. The four subcategories belonged to

the first major category—the models of public relations. The four subcategories

included the four dimensions of public relations, first, asymmetrical versus

symmetrical communication; second, one-way versus two-way communication; third,

mediated versus interpersonal communication; and, fourth, ethics.

After the major categories and subcategories were determined, H. Rubin and I.

Rubin (1995) suggested looking for relationships between the categories that were

thematically related or what Strauss (1987) called "axial coding." To see the inter-

relatedness of the main categories, I developed a coding sheet that listed the major

categories and subcategories (Appendix C). I studied the relationships between these

categories based on the theory that was discussed in the conceptualization of this

thesis. The data that belonged to the fourth major category—additional

characteristics that described public relations in Latvia—were used to supplement the

other three categories. The findings of the study were supported by direct quotes from

the participants. According to Lincoln and Guba (2003), the researcher needs to be

"conscious of having readers 'hear' their informants" (p. 283).

Ethical Considerations

Several participants expressed their concern of being identified by the readers

of this study. These participants believed that the small size of Latvia, close

professional connections among public relations practitioners, and the severe market

competition among the businesses may endanger their confidentiality. I confirmed to

my participants that I understand my obligation as a researcher to approach the issue

of confidentiality with the greatest respect. Therefore, throughout the final report I do

not identify the names, gender, specific titles, affiliations, and communication programs of the participants. I am immensely grateful for the contributions that the participants made to this study. The trust that we shared throughout and after the process of interviewing is the foundation of this research.

I informed my participants about the procedures that were related to data maintenance and reporting of the findings. I confirmed to my participants that the tapes, transcripts, and disks were accessible only to my advisor, Dr. Larissa A. Grunig, and myself. In order to ensure that participants understood issues related to confidentiality, I asked them to read and sign a copy of an informed consent form (Appendix D). I encouraged the participants to ask any questions related to data maintenance and reporting, the study in general, and my professional and personal background.

All of my participants received equal treatment. I viewed my participants as research partners who were actively involved in the research process. The study was guided by the interpretive approach tradition that explores "how people understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives" (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995, p. 34). Furthermore, in order to ensure reciprocity with my participants, I provided each of them with the executive summary of the study's findings. I also invited them to contact me after the interview if they had any questions about the study. Since the interviews were conducted, I have been exchanging e-mails with four participants who have contributed additional information about public relations to this study, helping me to gain a more complete understanding about the practice of public relations in Latvia.

Validity

To ensure the validity of my study and help eliminate the subjectivity of a researcher, I offered my participants the opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews, or what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) called "member validation." Member validation is a process of "taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true and accurate" (p. 242).

Because the interviews were conducted in Latvia, the following procedures were observed to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The quotes used in the final report to document the findings of the study were translated from Latvian to English by me. The participants of the study understood English; therefore, their review of the quotes provided another form of member validation.

Member validation provided this study with more detailed accounts of the experiences and observations of the participants. Several participants completed their initial descriptions and also added new perspectives to the topics discussed during the interviews. "Taking findings back to the field" allowed me to continue establishing trust with the participants and to re-confirm that their contributions to this study are essential components to describe the status of public relations in Latvia (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p. 242).

Reflexivity

I am aware that no study can avoid what Ang (1985) called "the traces of the subjectivity of the researcher" (pp. 11-12). I grew up in Latvia; therefore, the study may be influenced by my insider's point of view. Despite my efforts to ensure member validation, the possibility exists that an outsider could see the same

phenomena differently. However, I believe that my six years of experience living abroad allowed me to find a "golden mean" to combine the perspectives of an insider and an outsider.

Also, throughout my educational experience I have been immersed in the Excellence theory of public relations; therefore, I believe that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is the most ethical and effective way to practice public relations. However, I recognize the contributions that other approaches to communication have added to the discussion about public relations.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis discusses the results that were obtained from the interviews with the ten participants and provides answers to the four research questions proposed in the conceptualization chapter of the thesis. The findings are divided into nine main sections. The first six sections review the use of public relations models. The four models are: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1986). The analysis of the models is based on the four dimensions of public relations (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). These dimensions include asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication; one-way versus two-way communication, mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics of public relations. The first four sections review each of the four dimensions of public relations. The fifth section discusses the models that the participants practiced in Latvia. The sixth section analyzes the reasons some models are used more frequently than others.

The seventh section of this chapter of the thesis reviews if and in what ways communist propaganda has influenced the practice of contemporary public relations in Latvia. The eighth section assesses if and how public relations has helped the society transform from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned market economy to a free market economy. The ninth section supplements the answers to the research questions by identifying several characteristics that the participants believed completed the description of public relations in Latvia.

Dimension of Symmetrical Versus Asymmetrical Communication

The first sub-research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication described the practice of public relations in Latvia. The interviews with the ten participants revealed that most of them engaged in asymmetrical communication with their publics. Seven of the participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, and J—described communication activities that were only asymmetrical. Participants G, H, and I used both asymmetrical and symmetrical forms of communication, but symmetry dominated.

The three participants—G, H, and I—who employed symmetrical communication with their audiences were affiliated with public-sector organizations, e.g., state agencies or regional municipalities, whereas the rest of the participants practiced public relations for business organizations. Participants affiliated with public sector organizations—G, H, and I—described such communication goals as exchange of information between the organization and its publics, facilitation of dialogue between the organization and its publics, cooperation among various parties, and education. Participants affiliated with business organizations or public relations agencies that represented business organizations—A, B, C, D, E, F, and I—proposed such communication goals as publicity, marketing, image building, reputation management, shaping of public opinions, and lobbying.

In the following paragraphs asymmetrical and symmetrical communication activities are described. Each type of communication is analyzed according to three aspects—first, public relations goals; second, planning of public relations programs; and, third, research for public relations programs.

Asymmetrical Communication

  Public relations goals. Eight out of the ten participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, I, and J—engaged in asymmetrical communication with their publics. First, the most frequently discussed asymmetrical communication goals included *publicity and promotional aspects* of communication. Participants A, B, C, D, E, and J believed that the goal of their public relations programs was exposure or publicity. Participants B, D, E, F, I, and J discussed image-making and reputation management. Participants D, E, F, and I believed that the goal of public relations was to assist with marketing promotion. Participants B, C, and E revealed that another objective of public relations activities is sponsorship. Participant C acknowledged that the promotional communication activities served only the interests of the company:

   Of course, the main goal is publicity. It is much easier to coerce people than to

   negotiate with them. It is easier to tell your story than listen to what others

   have to say. The most important thing is what the enterprise has to say, not

   what the customers would want to say.

   Second, Participants B and D described their public relations goals as "*shaping public opinion*" and "regulat[ing] public opinion." Participants B and D shaped and regulated public opinion through media articles that were favorable to the company's stance on the issue. Participant D characterized how public opinion was regulated and favorable image built:

   We try to create an impression that the business flourishes and prospers . . .

   that its [company's] stock rates will increase. We deliver this financial

information to the investors directly or . . . through the mass media. We regulate public opinion and create a good image for the company.

Third, Participant A described *advocacy of the interests of a business enterprise* as another public relations goal. Participant A assisted a construction company to "defend against the attacks from a citizen pressure group." The construction company received a permit to build a new building in the courtyard of other buildings. The design plan of the new building showed that the building would block the outside view from the windows of other buildings and the owners of the building would put a fence around the property to prevent the residents of the other buildings from crossing the territory that had been available to the residents in the past. The residents of the old buildings formed a pressure group to oppose the construction plans. The group mailed letters to the media and hired a lawyer to defend the group's interests. After the first initiatives of the citizen pressure group the construction company hired Participant A's public relations agency to counter-attack the pressure group through the media in order to proceed with the company's construction plans. Participant A believed that companies have more resources than civic society groups; therefore, the civic society groups have little chance to "win" against the business enterprises.

Fourth, Participants C, G, and I suggested that one of the main public relations goals was to *inform society about the organization and its products*. Information programs were directed toward external publics and did not involve any feedback from these publics. The three participants used the mass media to perform the function of informing.

Participants B, E, I, and J discussed *lobbying* as another essential goal of their public relations programs. Participant I described how the mayors of towns in one region of Latvia formed a coalition to influence national legislation to pass laws that would benefit the development of the region. Participant I said: "These meetings . . . help to raise regional issues to the national agenda. Latvia is small and regions here are small. It is important to be aware that the coalition of municipalities can do much more than an individual municipality alone." Participants B and J assisted the same industry companies to form an association to lobby on national legislation.

Participants A and C believed that public relations practitioners would like to engage in equally reciprocal communication with organizational publics, but symmetry was not possible because the senior management of the organizations wanted to achieve immediate, short-term goals such as publicity and exposure. Participant F predicted that companies would propose more advanced public relations goals than publicity after the companies find their niche in the market and their financial turn-overs increase.

Planning of public relations programs. Interviews with participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and J revealed that the process of planning public relations programs was asymmetrical. Only the needs and goals of the company were considered. Participant D described the procedure of planning of public relations programs for one of the clients of Participant D's public relations agency. Participant D's description corresponded to what the other participants characterized. First, the needs and goals of the company were identified. Second, communication channels through which the publics could be reached were determined. Third, special public relations activities to

use these channels were discussed. The fourth step was the implementation of these activities. Fifth, the effects of those activities were monitored through media content analysis.

Participant G, who worked for a state agency, revealed that if the agency suspected that the public might oppose the agency's decision, an after-crisis management program was planned. Participant G described a situation in which the agency's decision was announced to the media a few minutes before the last new program of the day in order to ensure that the reporters did not have an opportunity to discuss the decision with outside experts who might have opposed the agency's decision.

Public relations research. Interviews with participants B, C, D, E, F, and J revealed that research goals of the organizations were asymmetrical. The purpose of the research programs was to learn what needs to be communicated to change an opinion, promote and sell products, and publicize an organization. Participant D described:

> You need to know how to work with your target audiences. If the research indicates that you do not know, you need to change something. The target audiences are set in their ways. You have to press the right buttons to get the necessary feedback from them.

Participants C, F, and J suggested that the main purpose of public relations research was to learn what messages were acceptable to the publics. Participant F found that research "guides what direction the company needs to take to reach its promotional and reputation goals."

Symmetrical Communication

　　Public relations goals. Only three participants—G, H, and I—engaged in symmetrical communication with the publics of their organizations. Each symmetrical communication activity is described below.

　　First, Participants G and H believed that the goal of the public relations practitioner was to *provide the management of the organization with the information of how organizational decisions may affect the public.* Participant G described:

> The public relations practitioner serves as a catalyst that facilitates simmering in the organization. He [or she] says, "Stop! We cannot do it. This decision will be difficult to explain to the public!" He [or she] needs to modify and transform unacceptable organizational decisions.

　　The second symmetrical public relations goal was to *organize public hearings, seminars, and discussions about the organizational decisions that affected the publics of the organization.* Representatives from labor unions, economic and professional associations, other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media were encouraged to attend these events and express their concerns.

　　Third, participants H and I *communicated with their internal publics* such as employees. They organized seminars to explain the role of public relations and how public relations can contribute to the overall mission of the organization. Participant H encouraged the employees, especially those from the Department of Client Services and regional branches of the agency, to suggest what aspects should be improved to communicate with the organizational publics better. Participant H also worked on

developing an effective communication system within the organization. Participant I, who worked for a town's municipality, believed that the role of public relations inside the organization was to initiate changes in organizational culture. Participant I described this role as follows:

> We [public relations practitioners] helped to change the internal culture and administration of the municipality. In the past everything was focused on the local bureaucracy. If residents needed to do something at the town council building, they had to wander from one office to another and wait until the clerks came back from whatever personal things they were doing. Now we have a so-called "one station agency." Inquiries from residents are accepted throughout the day. They [residents] can call us or come here . . . and all of their inquiries are answered at one place.

Fourth, Participant G, who worked for a state's regulatory agency, initiated the *exchange of information between the agency and the industry experts*. Participant G believed that the role of public relations practitioners was to provide the experts with accurate and reasoned information about the agency's decisions. Participant G also organized consultative meetings with the outside experts before the agency's management made the final decisions that affected the public.

Fifth, participants G and H *monitor the organization's Website to learn what issues were important to the publics*. Participant H hosted and managed a discussion forum for the Website's visitors. Both participants answered or found an expert to answer inquiries from individual members of the organization's publics.

Planning of public relations programs Although participants G, H, and I also identified the needs and goals of their organizations and included them in the public relations plan, the process of planning symmetrical public relations programs involved parties within and outside the organization. Participant G integrated the suggestions of outside experts from the industry and concerns voiced during the public hearings in the organization's communication plan. Participants H and I consulted other departments in the organization to include their goals in the communication plan.

In addition to the involvement of various parties, the role of research and the involvement of the senior management in the planning of public relations programs were more prominent in participants G, H, and I's organizations than in the organizations that practiced asymmetrical public relations. Participants H and I communicated directly with the senior management to explain the public relations plan and harmonized the public relations plan with the general mission of the organization.

Public relations research. Participants H and I believed that the goal of research was to learn what the organization should improve in its interaction and communication with the publics. Participant H conducted qualitative interviews with the representatives of the publics to find out how the organization could improve its client services. Participant I surveyed the residents of the town to discover what aspects of the municipality's operations the publics lacked information about and which aspects were misunderstood. Future public relations programs were developed to improve the areas of concern to the publics.

Dimension of One-Way Versus Two-Way Communication

The second sub-research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of one-way versus two-way communication described the practice of public relations in Latvia. The interviews with the ten participants revealed that all of them engaged in both one-way and two way communication. Participants F, G, H, and I employed two-way communication more often than other participants. Three of the four participants—G, H, and I—were affiliated with public-sector organizations such as state agencies and local municipalities. Participant F worked for a public relations agency and most of the clients were corporations.

In the following sections of this chapter of the thesis, aspects that distinguished between one-way and two-way communication are discussed. The first section describes the role of public relations research. The second section reviews the one-way and two way public relations activities that the participants employed to communicate with the organization's publics.

Role of Public Relations Research

The element that best distinguished between one-way and two-way communication programs was the presence of research activities, i.e., how willing the organization was to listen to its publics and to integrate the concerns of its publics in its overall communication initiatives. All ten participants engaged in some form of research. The goals of research and methods used are described below.

Goals of public relations research. The interviews with the participants identified two goals of public relations research. First, the research goal of eight participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and J—was *asymmetrical*. The participants

believed that they conducted research to learn what the organization's reputation and image were among its publics and in the media. The research helped to identify what the publics expected to hear from the organization. The organization's public relations programs were designed to appeal to the public's expectations to achieve the communication goals of the organization.

Second, participants H and I believed that the goal of public relations research was to learn about ways to improve communication between the organization and its publics. The needs of the publics were incorporated in the organization's communication programs. The research goals proposed by these two participants were *symmetrical*.

Research methods. The participants employed several research methods to conduct public relations research. Each of these methods is described below.

First, *media content analysis* was the most often used method. Nine participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, and J—monitored the media to learn if and in what context the organization was mentioned in the media. The second most frequently used research method was the *quantitative survey*. Seven participants—A, B, C, D, F, G, and I—employed this method. Data collection occurred through written questionnaires, telephone surveys, and face-to-face inquires with representatives of the organization's publics. Third, participants A, B, C, D, and J conducted *informal interviews with journalists* to learn their opinion about the organization. Fourth, three participants—B, E, and H—conducted *in-depth interviews with the representatives of organization's publics*. Fifth, participants B and D *interviewed opinion leaders* such as leading representatives of political parties and

economic interest groups to learn their opinions about the organization, the industry, and the future of the industry. Sixth, participants B and F organized *focus group discussions* with the representatives of the organization's publics to understand their perceptions of the organization.

Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, and J, who represented public relations agencies, acknowledged that most of the organizations they worked with did not want to conduct research. Participant C explained that "research is an exception, not a law." The interviews revealed two reasons for the lack of public relations research. First, the senior management of the organization believed that the organization could not afford to invest in research. Second, the senior management of the organization believed that research is not necessary to achieve the goals of publicity.

Most of the participants—A, B, C, D, G, and J—believed that they lacked experience to conduct research; therefore, they out-sourced the work to professional research firms. The professional firms were frequently hired to conduct quantitative surveys. Participants E, F, H, and I conducted public relations research by themselves. Five participants—A, B, C, D, and J—combined the research results obtained by professional research firms and themselves.

Public Relations Activities

All participants engaged in both one-way and two way communication. Specific activities for both forms of communication are discussed in the last paragraphs of this section.

One-way communication activities. First, eight participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, I, and J—worked on *publicizing the organization and creating a positive image for*

the organization. The public relations practitioners wrote press releases; pitched stories to the media; and organized press conferences, media breakfasts, and other special events such as annual awards ceremonies and anniversaries. Other tasks related with publicity and image-making included sponsorship of cultural and sports programs; media training of the company's senior management; and the development of the organization's slogans, logos, and other promotional items.

Second, participants C, E, G, H, and I conducted *informational campaigns* about their organizations. Informational campaigns included activities such as informational pages written by the organization's public relations practitioners in industry and special interest publications; radio and television programs produced by public relations practitioners for the public radio station and television channel; brochures, newsletters, pamphlets, and other materials about the organization and its activities; and presentations about the organization for the governmental officials, legislators, and state agencies.

Two-way communication activities. First, the most frequently practiced two-way communication activity was *coalition building with other organizations or constituencies*. Participants B and J helped the same industry organizations to form an association and lobby the industry's interests on national legislation. Participant E helped several non-governmental organizations to build a coalition and lobby on national legislation to pass a law that facilitated the development of the non-governmental organization sector in Latvia. Participant I worked on building a coalition of mayors from one region in Latvia to lobby on national legislation to pass a law that contributed to the economic and cultural development of this region. When

Participant G's state agency tried to implement a more transparent process of reporting about financial records of private businesses, an economic interest group that opposed the agency's position attacked the state agency through one newspaper that was affiliated with this economic interest group. Participant G sought support from entrepreneurial associations and other state agencies to explain its stance and demonstrate why the new process of reporting about the company's financial records would contribute to the state's budget and the economic development of the country.

Second, the interviews with participants A, B, C, D, G, and H revealed that the *maintenance of good relationships between the organization and its publics* was another two-way communication activity performed by the participants. Participants organized special dinners for the biggest customers and investors to learn what they expected from the organization, responded to individual inquiries from the organization's publics and the media, and initiated personal meetings with the representatives of the organization's publics and the media.

Third, participants G, H, and I conducted *issues management* for their organizations. The participants identified potential problems and brought them to the attention of the management. The issues were identified through research and direct communication with representatives of the publics. The problem identification methods included surveys, interviews, public hearings, seminars, and workshops. The participants advised the management on the ways to solve the problems and improve communication with the publics.

Fourth, participants G and H *responded to direct face-to-face, telephone, and online inquiries from the members of the organization's publics* If the participants

were not able to provide an answer to the inquiries, they found an expert in the

organization who was knowledgeable about the issue.

Fifth, participants H and I *communicated with the internal publics* of the

organization. Both participants organized seminars to explain the role of public

relations and what contributions the function provides to the organization. The

employees were encouraged to ask questions and provide suggestions about ways to

improve internal and external communication programs of the organization.

Sixth, Participant A *advocated the interests of a business enterprise* against

the attacks from a "citizen interest group." The participant researched the media to

learn about the arguments of the "citizen interest group" and then counter-argued by

employing the media as a channel to deliver the company's message.

Dimension of Mediated Versus Interpersonal Communication

The third sub-research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of

mediated versus interpersonal communication described the practice of public

relations in Latvia. The interviews revealed that all ten participants employed the

mass media to communicate with their publics. However, nine of the ten participants

also described public relations activities that involved interpersonal communication

with the organization's publics. Each type of communication is discussed separately

in the next paragraphs.

Mediated Communication

Five of the participants—A, C, E, F, and I—believed that media relations was

the dominant public relations activity in Latvia. First, the possible cause for the

dominance of media relations and the effects of media relations on the field of public

relations is explained. Second, the description of mediated communication concludes with specific activities of media relations revealed by the participants during the interviews.

The influence of former journalists on the field of public relations. Participants C, D, E, F, G, H, and I believed that the significance of media relations had resulted from the former educational and professional backgrounds of the current public relations practitioners. Most of the practitioners were former journalists who became public relations practitioners when the field started to develop in Latvia in the mid-1990s. Also, six of the ten participants—B, D, E, H, I, and J—who were interviewed for this study were former journalists.

Participants C, E, F, G, and I believed that the public relations practitioners who had been journalists in the past had good personal contacts with their former colleagues in media organizations; therefore, these practitioners could provide their organizations with wide exposure and publicity in the media. Participant E described the early stages of public relations in Latvia as follows: "If you were a former journalist, you called your buddies and you got publicity . . . and your client was happy."

Participants C, E, F, and I suggested that the influence of former journalists hindered the development of the field of public relations in Latvia. First, participants C, F, and I found that the concentration on media relations limited the function of public relations to only one activity, i.e., communication with the media. Second, participants F and I suggested that the first practitioners' lack of knowledge about the field positioned public relations as a secretarial task with a goal, as Participant F said,

"to get something about the organization published in the paper." The management of the organization did not view public relations as a management function and, therefore, public relations practitioners did not have any influence and decision-making power within the organization. Participant I explained:

> They [former journalists] assign only one function to public relations. This public relations practitioner is a press secretary. This person only performs the function of informing. He [or she] does not take part in decision making, event organization, planning of public relations programs, and diagnosing of potential problems. This limited role of public relations does not help the organization and does not facilitate the development of the field in general. This is the reason why nobody values public relations in the organization. The practitioner sits at some distant corner, sends out press releases and, gets paid like an office clerk. Only a professional can be valued and facilitate the development of the field.

Third, Participant I was concerned that the lack of understanding about the field and concentration on media relations will continue in the future because most of the public relations faculty at Latvian universities and colleges were former journalists who knew only about this single aspect of public relations.

In the next few paragraphs the goal and activities of mediated communication is described. The specific activities are listed in the order of frequency of mention of activities during the interviews with the participants.

Goals and activities of mediated communication. One half of the participants—A, D, E, I, and J—found that media were one of the most essential

publics of their organizations. Five of the participants—C, D, E, G, H, and I—

believed that the media were a secondary public through which the organization

reached its other publics. Participant G described the mass media as instruments that

delivered information about the organization's decisions to the public. Participants D,

E, and I found that the media could be both—primary and secondary—publics.

Nine participants—A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, and J—believed the goals of media

relations activities were good publicity and image for the organization. The

participants engaged in several activities to achieve these goals. First, the nine

participants organized *special events* such as press conferences, media breakfasts, and

educational meetings to explain the role and mission of their organizations to

journalists. Second, six participants—A, B, E, F, G, and J—*monitored the media and*

conducted content analysis to learn what the media report about their organizations.

Third, five participants—A, B, D, I, and J—conducted *informal interviews with*

journalists to find out the opinions and attitudes of the journalists about the

organizations. Fourth, participants A, D, H, and I engaged in *media training* of the

members of the organization's senior management. Fifth, participants D, G, H, and J

wrote *press releases and other informative materials* about the organization to

distribute to the media. Sixth, three participants—G, H, and I—believed that one of

their main activities was to respond to media inquiries or find an expert to respond to

the inquiries. Seventh, Participant I *organized educational meetings for reporters of*

the regional media to explain the role of public relations when the field started to

develop in Latvia in the mid-1990s.

Other forms of mediated communication described by the participants included advertisements, direct mail letters, informational brochures, Websites, and e-newsletters. Participants A, D, and J believed that paid *advertisements in the media* was another way to publicize the organization and communicate with the organization's publics. Participants D, G, H, and J sent *direct mail letters* and disseminated *brochures* to deliver their messages to the publics. Participants G and H, who worked for public-sector organizations, posted new information about the organizations on the organizational *Websites*. Participant H e-mailed a monthly *online newsletter* to those people who signed up for the state agency's e-mail list.

In addition to mediated communication, participants also described activities that involved interpersonal communication with the organizational publics. The next paragraphs of this section discuss each interpersonal communication activity. The activities are listed in the order of frequency of mention of activities during the interviews.

Interpersonal Communication

Nine participants—B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J—revealed that they engaged in interpersonal communication with their internal and external publics. First, the most frequently discussed activity was *coalition building with other organizations* to resolve mutual problems. Participants B and J organized workshops for the same industry companies in order to develop lobbying programs to influence the governmental policies about the industry. Participants E, G, and H, who represented public-sector organizations, prepared and held seminars and public hearings to discuss the decisions of their organizations and the effects of those decisions on their

publics. The publics included representatives of professional associations, professional economic associations, labor unions, other public sector organizations, and industry experts. Participant I organized meetings of regional mayors to discuss the further economic development of the region and to lobby regional interests on national legislation. Participant J assisted companies from the same industry to found a non-governmental organization to lobby on legislation.

Second, participants B, C, E, F, and H engaged in *research activities* that involved interpersonal communication with representatives of the organizational publics. The goal of the research was to improve communication with the publics. The research activities included interviews, informal conversations, and focus group discussions with the representatives of the organization's publics.

Third, participants F, G, H, and I held *personal meetings with the senior managements* of their companies and their client companies to explain and discuss the goals and programs for their public relations efforts. These four participants emphasized the importance of feedback from the senior management about the public relations programs and goals.

Fourth, three participants—B, H, and I—organized *special events* for the internal publics of the organization. Participants H and I organized educational seminars for employees to explain the role of public relations and the need for effective internal communication systems in the organizations. During the seminars the employees were encouraged to ask questions and provide suggestions about ways to improve their internal and external communication programs. Participant B organized so-called "corporate entertainment events" for employees. These events

included sports games, anniversaries, awards, and other celebrations. Participant B believed that corporate entertainment provided employees with an opportunity to meet each other and the senior management of the company.

Fifth, participants D and I organized *special events for external publics* such as customers, residents of the town, and entrepreneurs of the region. The client of Participant D's public relations agency invited the biggest customers to dinner receptions. Participant I, who worked for a municipality of one town, organized annual awards ceremonies for the residents of the town. The goal of the ceremonies was to honor residents who had contributed to the economic and cultural development of the town during the year. The same participant also organized the *Entrepreneur Days* to facilitate the prosperous environment for start-up businesses in the town. The *Entrepreneur Days* included events such as lectures, workshops, and dinners for attendees to network.

Sixth, participants G and H *communicated with the organization's publics through the Websites of their organizations*. Both participants answered the online inquiries of their customers or found experts within the organizations to answer the questions. Participant H also hosted and monitored an online discussion forum on the organization's Website.

Seventh, participants G and I *engaged public relations students from local universities and colleges in the research activities of their organizations.* Both participants believed that the engagement of the students was a mutually reciprocal activity. The participants believed that they contributed to the education of the future public relations practitioners, whereas the students provided the organizations with

their knowledge and assisted with the research activities. Eighth, Participant G, who worked for a state agency, organized *educational seminars* for the representative of the government, parliament, local municipalities, and other public sector institutions to explain the activities, decisions, and plans of the state agency.

Dimension of Ethics

The fourth sub-research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of ethics described the practice of public relations in Latvia. Interviews with eight participants—A, B, C, E, F, H, I, and J—revealed several ethical concerns that hindered the development of the field of public relations in Latvia. Only two of the participants—D and G—did not see any major problems of an ethical nature. The ethical concerns included, first, unethical behavior of the mass media; second, unethical usage of non-governmental organizations in order to achieve business goals; and third, lack of discussion about the ethics of public relations practitioners.

Unethical Behavior of Mass Media

The first concern of participants was the unethical behavior of the mass media in Latvia. Participants A, B, C, E, F, and H revealed three types of unethical media activities. First, the media accepted money from public relations agencies and organizations to write and publish articles as news stories although these organizations or the clients of the public relations agencies paid for these articles. Second, media organizations represented concealed political and economic inclinations that corresponded with the interests of political and economic groups. Third, the same people owned public relations agencies and mass media organizations.

Pre-paid "news reports." Participant A believed that public relations agencies secretly paid newspapers, especially Russian newspapers, to gain publicity for their clients. Also, Participant E observed that political parties paid media organizations to get them to publish or air general interest interviews with the political candidates of the parties. The media organizations did not indicate that the political parties paid for the interviews.

Participant H found that certain publications engaged in the blackmailing of businesses. A publication started negative reporting about the enterprise in order to force the enterprise to invest in advertising with the publication. As soon as the enterprise bought advertisements, negative reporting about the enterprise stopped.

Political and economic aspirations of the media. Participants B, E, and H agreed that some media organizations concealed their close connections with political and economic interest groups. Participant B said:

> You need to know who the owners of the media organizations are . . . what their political aspirations are and what their economic ambitions are. It is not enough that you have good information and that information is interesting to the readers or viewers. It often does not matter. There are media companies that disseminate only the opinions of their owners.

Participants B and H also observed that media organizations that represented political and economic interest groups often reported information that was not based on facts in order to discredit those parties that disagreed with the stance of the political or economic interest groups. Participant H labeled the connection between the media and the political and economic interest groups as "black PR."

Conflicting ownership of public relations agencies and media organizations.
Participants C, F, and H indicated that one of the main ethical concerns was unfair
market conditions for public relations agencies. The participants described a situation
where the same person owned a public relations agency and a media organization.
Participant C characterized this situation as a "conflict of interest" where the clients
of the agency that was owned by the same person as the media organization had much
broader representation in this media than did any other organization. Although the
three participants found this situation a significant breach of ethics in both fields—
public relations and journalism—none of them believed that anything could be done
to change the situation. Participant F posited that as long as there was no law that
made this conflicting ownership illegal, the problem could not be solved. Participant
H found that in Latvia everybody knows each other. Therefore, an open discussion
about the situation would destroy the "good relationship" with the unethical media
organization as Participant H explained: "Everybody knows it is not ok, but we
[public relations practitioners] also know that is where publicity and money for us
comes from. Nobody wants to damage the relationship. Latvia is too small."

However, Participant E viewed the small size of Latvia as a positive element
that could raise the standards of ethics in public relations. Participant E said: "I never
engage in unethical transactions with the media. You can pay once, but then? We live
in the same pond of frogs. We know each other. If you do it once, you can forget
about your good reputation." Participants A, C, and H believed that the media also
were becoming more educated and responsible than they had been in the past. These

three participants credited Latvia's biggest daily newspaper as a positive example of high ethical standards and strict distinction between advertising and news reports.

Inter-Related Interests of Businesses and Non-Governmental Organizations

The second ethical concern of the participants involved inter-related interests of businesses and non-governmental organizations. Participants C, E, and F discussed the non-governmental organizations that were financed by private companies to lobby the business interests of those companies. Participants C and E identified the pharmaceutical industry as one of the main industries that funded non-governmental organizations to represent their interests in the media and through communication with the government. A law forbids pharmaceutical companies from advertising their products in the media; therefore, these companies try to gain publicity and awareness about their products through health interest groups that promote the drugs manufactured by the pharmaceutical companies.

Lack of Discussion about Ethics among Public Relations Practitioners

The third aspect that participants associated with the ethics of public relations was the lack of discussion about this issue among public relations practitioners. Participants C, E, H, and I believed that professional associations of public relations professionals need to initiate the discussion. These four participants admitted that although two professional associations[1] are established in Latvia, the issue of the ethics of public relations has not been raised.

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[1] The membership of one association—the Latvian Association of Public Relations Professionals—consists of individual public relations practitioners, whereas the membership of the other association—the Association of Latvian Public Relations Companies—includes public relations agencies.

Participant E believed that lack of discussion resulted from the low level of professionalism among public relations practitioners and the severe competition for clients among public relations agencies in Latvia. Participant H, who had participated in a few first activities of one of the associations, was discouraged after the participant learned that the association did not follow its own statutes:

> The statutes contained a principle that every member of the association must have experience in public relations. I noticed that some of the members did not have any experience. I found it wrong. If there is such a principle then the association should be observing it, but it was not doing so. This is the reason that I decided not to get involved with the association.

Participant I suggested that the associations did not discuss issues that were essential for the development of the field:

> I have observed the work of both associations and I have to say that they do nothing. They just want to show off—hey, here I am . . . I am the president of a public relations association. They need to monitor whether or not public relations is practiced ethically and educate public relations practitioners about the role of public relations, but . . . . The most recent activity of the associations that I have heard of is an annual awards ceremony. I am sure that the award went to somebody who implemented an interesting public relations campaign, but should it be a priority? Wouldn't educational activities and the development of the field be more important?

Participant H believed that discussion about the ethics of communication was only raised before political elections, mostly in regards to political advertising. These

initiatives did not come from public relations practitioners, but from the non-governmental organization *Delna* that facilitated the development of democratic society through transparent exchange of information between the government and the society, and prevention of corruption in Latvia (Delna, n.d.).

According to Participant I, professional public relations associations should also increase the status of the field among the practitioners and students of public relations. Participant I believed that many public relations practitioners and students viewed the field as inherently unethical:

> The biggest problem is that many public relations practitioners and students consider that public relations is basically unethical. This notion helps them to justify their unethical behavior—manipulation of information, the disclosure of positive aspects only. The public relations practitioners of some governmental organizations even block journalists' access to their organization to ensure that nobody understands what happens within the organization.

Models and Dimensions of Public Relations

The first research question asked what, if any, model or models of public relations were practiced in Latvia. The study revealed that public relations practitioners in Latvia used all four models of public relations—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. The publicity and public information models dominated. The two-way asymmetrical model of public relations was also employed, but the participants did not use this model so often as

the first two models. The participants practiced the two-way symmetrical model the least. Each of the participants practiced more than one model.

This section of the thesis reviews how the four dimensions of public relations related to the models of public relations. The reasons that the participants chose one model over another are discussed in the next section.

Asymmetry Versus Symmetry

The interviews with the participants demonstrated that asymmetrical communication dominated over symmetrical communication. All ten participants engaged in asymmetrical communication. Three participants—G, H, and I—performed public relations activities that involved symmetrical communication with the organization's publics, but these three participants also engaged in asymmetrical communication.

Communication goals. The participants proposed both—asymmetrical and symmetrical—communication goals. The three models—press agentry, public information, and two-way asymmetrical—that permitted asymmetrical communication with the organization's publics are discussed first. The analysis of symmetrical communication activities follows.

First, communication goals such as publicity and efforts to influence the public opinion by pitching stories to the media showed that the press agentry model was employed. Eight participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, I, and J—proposed publicity as the communication goal of their organization and two participants—B and D—suggested that "shaping public opinion" was the goal of their communication programs. Second, the communication goal of informing the public about the

organization corresponded with the public information model. Participants C, G, and I believed that information campaigns were an essential part of the organization's communication efforts. Third, the two-way asymmetrical model was practiced when participants tried to achieve the goals of the organization without considering the expectations of the organization's publics. For example, Participant A advocated the interests of a business enterprise against the activist group's objections to a new construction site. The role of the pubic relations practitioner was to monitor the media and the group to counter-attack the activities of this group. Participant J formed coalitions among the same industry organizations to lobby the interests of the industry on national legislation.

Fourth, three participants—G, H, and I—proposed communication goals that demonstrated the use of the two-way symmetrical model. The symmetrical activities included organizing public hearings and discussions to learn the ways the organization's decisions affected its publics; communicating the needs of publics to management; encouraging an information exchange among the organization's publics; monitoring the organization's Website to learn about the issues that were important to the publics; and initiating communication between the organization and the third-party industry experts.

Planning of public relations programs. In addition to the communication goals of the organization, the planning process of public relations programs suggested conclusions about the practitioner's choice of the models of public relations. If planning involved only the interests of the organization, the two-way asymmetrical model was employed. Eight participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and J—described a

similar process of planning public relations programs. First, the goals and needs of the organization were determined. Second, communication channels to reach the organization's goals were identified. Third, specific activities to use these channels were planned. Fourth, the proposed activities were implemented. Sixth, the media were monitored to learn about the success of the program.

The planning process of symmetrical public relations programs differed from the planning process of asymmetrical communication programs. The interviews with participants H and I revealed that the development of symmetrical communication programs involved exchange of information among multiple parties within and outside the organization, the presence of research activities, and the involvement of senior management in the development of communication activities. Research was conducted to learn about the aspects that the organization needed to improve in communication with the organization's publics. Participant H, who represented a state agency, interviewed the agency's clients to learn about the ways to improve communication between the clients and the agency's Client Services representatives. Participant I, who worked for the town's municipality, conducted quantitative surveys to explore what aspects of the municipality's operations the residents of the town were not familiar with.

One-Way Versus Two-Way Communication

All ten participants engaged in both one-way and two-way communication with their publics. Four participants—F, G, H, and I—preferred two-way communication over one-way communication although these participants also employed one-way communication.

The first type of *one-way communication* activities included publicizing the organization and creating a positive image for the organization. These activities corresponded with the press agentry model of public relations. Eight participants—A, B, C, D, E, F, I, and J—practiced the press agentry model.

The second type of one-way communication included informational campaigns about the organization. Participants G, H, and J conducted informational campaigns. The activities of these three participants were consistent with the characterization of the public information model of public relations.

The presence of research activities led to the conclusion that the models involving *two-way communication* were practiced. The participants, who believed that the goal of research was to identify the expectations of the publics designed communication programs to appeal to these expectations, and employed the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations. The participants who tried to learn about the ways to improve communication between the organization and its publics, practiced the two-way symmetrical model of public relations.

Communication activities such as coalition building with other organizations or constituencies, maintenance of good relationships between the organization and its publics, issues management, responding to inquiries from the organization's publics, and exchange of information among the members of internal publics demonstrated the two-directional nature of communication. The goals of the specific public relations program determined if communication activities were asymmetrical or symmetrical. For example, an organization that built coalitions with other organizations to lobby their interests on national legislation employed the two-way

asymmetrical model of public relations. If the organization built coalitions with other organizations to understand the diverse aspects of the problem and then incorporated the interests of all parties in the solution to the problem, the two way symmetrical model was practiced. For example, Participant G, whose state agency had to make a decision about a rate increase for services that affected a large part of the population, invited outside industry experts, representatives from professional associations, officials from other agencies, and reporters to a public hearing to discuss the rate increase. After the hearing Participant G tried to integrate the interests of all parties in the final decision.

Mediated Versus Interpersonal Communication

All participants employed mediated forms of communication to deliver their messages to the organization's publics. Half of the participants—A, C, E, F, and I— suggested that communication through the media was the dominant public relations activity in Latvia. Communication through the media was conducted, first, to achieve publicity and a good image for the organization, and, second, to inform the publics about the organization. In addition to communication through the media, the participants used other forms of mediated communication such as advertisements, direct mail letters, brochures, and Websites to reach the publicity and informational goals of the organization. The first type of goals—publicity and image-making— corresponded with the press agentry model of public relations; whereas, the informational goals of the organization were characteristic of the public information model.

Nine participants—B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J—engaged in interpersonal communication with the organization's publics to explain the decisions of the organization. Interpersonal communication was employed to build coalitions with other organizations to resolve mutual problems and lobby on national legislation; research the needs and expectations of the organization's publics; communicate with the organization's senior management; interact with the organization's external and internal publics; engage public relations students from local universities and colleges in the research activities of the organization; and organize face-to-face meetings with the representatives from the government, parliament, local municipalities, and other public sector organizations. The two-directional nature of the interpersonal activities indicated that two-way models were used. Interpersonal communication activities were performed to reach both asymmetrical and symmetrical communication goals of the organization.

Ethics

The interviews with participants revealed several ethical concerns that hindered the practice of the two-way symmetrical model. First, six of the participants—A, B, C, E, F, and H—believed that *unethical interaction between public relations practitioners and media organizations* affected the practice of public relations in Latvia. Public relations agencies secretly paid the media to report "news" about the organization in order to gain publicity and exposure for their clients. Participants also found that some media organizations concealed their close affiliation with political and economic interest groups, and in some cases the same person owned a public relations agency and a media organization. The participants believe

that these issues of ethics created unfair market conditions and conflicts of interest.

Although these issues were a valid concern of an ethical nature, the issues also

demonstrated the publicity and media exposure goals of the participants'

organizations. By trying to achieve the goal of publicity the participants supported the

unethical behavior of the media and did not re-shift focus from the press agentry

model of public relations to more advanced models of public relations that involved

direct and symmetrical exchange of information between the organization and its

publics.

The second major ethical concern that participants C, E, and F described

involved *inter-related interests of business and non-governmental organizations*.

Private businesses, especially pharmaceutical, secretly hired non-governmental

organizations to lobby the business interests of these companies. Because a law

prohibiting advertising of pharmaceutical products was in effect in Latvia, the main

goal of these pharmaceutical companies was to gain publicity and awareness for their

products. The attempts of these companies to publicize their products demonstrated

the use of the press agentry model.

Participants C, E, H, and I revealed that the third major group of ethical

concerns involved a *lack of discussion about ethics* among public relations

practitioners. The low level of professionalism and severe competition for clients

among public relations agencies did not promote the use of the symmetrical model of

public relations. The participants acknowledged that professional associations did not

facilitate educational activities for public relations practitioners and the development

of the field. Furthermore, the status of the field was low among public relations

practitioners themselves and among students of public relations. Practitioners and students believed that the field was inherently unethical. This perception of the field might have interfered with the practice of the two-way symmetrical model that valued ethical communication among all parties involved.

Choosing Models of Public Relations

This section of the thesis answers the second research question, about why the participants chose one model of public relations over another. The first part of the section discusses the educational and professional backgrounds of the participants. The second part analyzes the effects of low professional standards on the choice of public relations models. The third part proposes ways to re-shift focus from publicity to more advanced models of public relations.

Backgrounds of Public Relations Practitioners

As the previous section of this chapter demonstrated, the press agentry and public information models dominated among public relations practitioners in Latvia. The leading influence that might have determined the prevalence of these two models was the *educational background* of the first public relations practitioners. Only two of the ten participants—C and I—had earned a formal higher degree in public relations. The rest of the participants were self-taught, or learned about public relations through practical experience.

Second, the *professional background* of the participants could have affected the choice of the models of public relations. Six of the ten participants—B, D, E, H, I, and J—were former journalists. These practitioners had the skills to write articles and engage in one-directional dissemination of information. As Participant F described it,

the journalistic experiences of the first public relations practitioners limited public

relations to a secretarial task that involved delivering information from the

organization to unidentified publics. In addition to their writing skills, the first public

relations practitioners also had connections with their former colleagues in the media.

The combination of the assigned limited function to public relations and connections

with former colleagues in the media allowed the practitioners to reach the most

obvious and measurable short-term goals such as publicity and exposure of the

organization in the media. Six of the ten participants—A, B, C, D, G, and J—

acknowledged that they were not experienced in conducting research—a significant

element of the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models.

Furthermore, interviews with participants A, I, and J revealed that in the

future the influence of publicity on public relations may persist. Although many

universities and colleges in Latvia currently offered formal education in public

relations, the participants acknowledged that these study programs in public relations

had many deficiencies. First, Participant I admitted that many members of the faculty

were former journalists who lacked knowledge about the diverse aspects of public

relations. Second, Participant A believed that some of the educators were former

disseminators of propaganda for the Communist Party. Therefore, the participant

suggested that the public relations practitioners did not value the current educational

programs in public relations. Third, Participant J found that current public relations

programs did not prepare students for the practical necessities of the profession.

Lack of Professional Standards

Four participants—C, E, H, and I—related the choice of less-advanced models of public relations to low professional standards among practitioners. The participants believed that professional associations needed to initiate education of public relations practitioners. The participants agreed that although two professional associations had been established in Latvia, their activities were insufficient for the professional growth of the field. Participant I suggested that, instead of monitoring whether public relations was practiced ethically and educating public relations practitioners about the field, the two associations spent their time organizing annual awards ceremonies to honor "somebody who has implemented an interesting public relations campaign." The same participant also believed that the task of public relations associations was to change the many misconceptions that the practitioners had about the field. Participant I suggested that the practitioners and publics relations students viewed public relations as inherently unethical. This view allowed public relations practitioners to justify their unethical practice of public relations by "manipulat[ing] information, disclos[ing] only the positive aspects . . . [and] block[ing] journalists' access to [the] organization to ensure that nobody understands what happens within the organization."

Participant E found that growth of the field could not occur until the competition for clients among public relations agencies became less severe than it was now. The participant believed that the competition did not permit open and honest communication. Participant F also believed that public relations practitioners

will start practicing advanced models of public relations when businesses find their

niche in the market and their financial turn-overs increase.

The interviews revealed that public relations practitioners expected a third-

party professional associations and changes in the environment such as less severe

competition and improved financial turn-overs to open the discussion about the

development of the field. Participants C, F, and H described a situation that

demonstrated lack of initiative from public relations practitioners themselves to

increase the standards of the profession. The participants discussed a conflict of

interest where the same person owned both a public relations agency and a media

organization. The clients of this person's public relations agency had better access to

the person's media organization than did other public relations representatives.

Although the three participants agreed that this situation was a significant breach of

ethics in the fields of public relations and journalism, the participants felt powerless

to change anything about the situation unless a law forbidding this type of ownership

was passed. Participant F explained that public relations practitioners avoided

discussing the situation because they were concerned that an open confrontation

would damage their "good relationship" with the unethical media organization. The

communication goal of publicity encouraged the participants to tolerate the rules set

by the unethical media organization.

Away from Publicity to Advanced Forms of Communication

Although the models of publicity and public information dominated, the

interviews with the ten participants revealed that advanced models of public

relations—two way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical—were also practiced. The conditions that determined the use of the two-way models are discussed below.

One-way models versus two-way models. First, the two-way models were employed when public relations practitioners identify a *specific communication problem*. Some examples of the use of the two-way models to solve specific problems included coalition building with other organizations to defend the interests of the region or the industry; research activities to improve communication with the organization's publics; and discussions with the organization's employees and outside experts. Second, the two-way models of public relations were practiced when the participants identified the *specific publics* with which the organization wished to engage in communication. For example, public relations practitioners assisted the organization in building coalitions with other organizations by identifying organizations with similar problems.

Two-way asymmetrical versus symmetrical models. Communication goals of the organization and the type of organization determined which two-way model was practiced. First, if the organization's *communication goals* were asymmetrical the two-way asymmetrical model was employed; if the organization's communication goals were symmetrical the two-way symmetrical model was used. The asymmetrical goals of public relations programs involved learning about the expectations of the publics and then designing the organization's message to appeal to the expectations of these publics. Participant D explained the asymmetrical communication goals: "You have to press the right buttons to get the necessary feedback from them [organization's publics]." The communication goals of the organizations that employ

the symmetrical model of public relations included improving communication

between the organization and its publics through open exchange of information.

Participant G held public hearings to learn what outside industry experts, officials

from state agencies, and representatives from professional associations and the media

thought about the rate increase for services that affected a large part of the population.

Participant I organized meetings for mayors of one region to discuss ways to develop

the region and to incorporate the interests of the region in national legislation.

The process of planning symmetrical communication programs was different

from the ways asymmetrical programs were planned. The development of

symmetrical communication programs involved researching the needs of the

organization's internal and external publics; integrating the various needs in the

organization's communication goals; and engaging senior management in the

planning process of public relations programs. For example, before Participant H

developed a public relations program for the agency, the participant conducted annual

surveys and interviews with the clients to learn what the clients expected from the

agency. Participant H integrated the goals of the organization's other departments in

the organization's public relations program. This participant was a part of the

organization's management; therefore, the participant discussed the public relations

program with other members of the agency's senior management.

The interviews with participants A, F, G, H, and I demonstrated that the

engagement of senior management was especially important in the practice of

advanced models of public relations. Participants A and C admitted that they have

experienced situations where the organization's management hindered the practice of

two-way symmetrical communication. The participants acknowledged that in these situations public relations practitioners suggested practicing symmetrical communication but that management did not understand the value of research or that the organization lacked the resources to invest in public relations research.

Second, the interviews also revealed that the *type of organization* determined which two-way model of public relations was employed. The communication goals of the public-sector organizations were more symmetrical than those of private-sector organizations. For the public-sector organizations, communication goals were to exchange information between the organization and its publics, to facilitate dialogue between the organization and its publics, to promote cooperation among parties involved in the process of communication, and to educate the organization's publics. The communication goals of private-sector organizations included publicity, marketing, image-making, reputation management, shaping of public opinion, and lobbying.

Effects of Communist Propaganda

The third research question asked how, if at all, former communist propaganda had influenced the practice of public relations in Latvia. Seven participants believed communist propaganda had affected how public relations was practiced in contemporary Latvia. Two other participants said that they were too young to have personally experienced communist propaganda, but they were able to give examples of how communist propaganda has affected the field of public relations. The tenth participant said that most of the public relations practitioners

were too young to know anything about communist propaganda and did not discuss this issue.

The interviews with the participants revealed five effects of communist propaganda on the field of public relations. These effects included lack of communication and decision-making skills, lack of trust between public relations practitioners and the media, lack of media independence, unwillingness to disclose information, and continued involvement of communist-trained propagandists. Each of these effects is discussed below.

Lack of Communication and Decision-Making Skills

First, communist propaganda has affected *the way people communicate and make decisions*. Participants B, J, and I found the terms "dialogue" and "cooperation" new concepts for the post communism Latvian society. Participant B believed that the old one-directional speech patterns such as slogans were still effective means to deliver a message to different social groups. The need to discuss and rationalize the message was nonexistent. Criticism was unacceptable:

> Society has lived under propaganda in Latvia. Many people do not understand what a dialogue is. Everything is black or white for people. We cannot organize seminars, discussions, and round-tables. We have invited experts, opinion leaders, and people who are interested in the issues to share opinions; but a significant part of the society does not understand this approach. In response, they just roar out their slogans. They are not experienced in discussing matters. If you want to communicate with them, you also have to use very clear, precise, and laudatory slogans.

Lack of Trust between Public Relations Practitioners and the Media

The second effect of former communist propaganda on contemporary public relations in Latvia was *distrust between public relations practitioners and the media*. Participant E explained that reporters believed that information prepared by public relations practitioners was propaganda—"a prepared opinion with a certain goal; the reporters *a priori* assume that this goal is negative." Participants C, I, and J also discussed the hostility between public relations practitioners and the media. Participant C described the situation:

I don't know what those journalists have against public relations practitioners. They [journalists] are literally hostile. They do not see that they can also benefit from us. They just think that we badger them. They need to understand that our relationship can be mutually beneficial. . . . I am the key that unlocks the door to information that they are looking for. I am not saying that they would not be able to find that information in some other ways, but I can help them. I work according to my best conscience. I do not distort information. I do not lie. I do not hide anything. We [public relations practitioners] can make their [journalists] lives much easier.

Participant J described a similar phenomenon:

Journalists lack knowledge about public relations and what they can gain from it. This lack of knowledge causes suspicion and distrust. One of my international clients was opening a subsidiary in Latvia. On the day of the opening two senior members of the company's management from abroad visited Latvia. Before their arrival I informed the media that they [the

company's representatives from abroad] would be here and would be

available for interviews. None of the media organizations responded. After a

few weeks I received a letter from the editor of a magazine. She asked me to

schedule an interview with the same people in the company's home country.

Participant I mentioned that not only did journalists distrust public relations

practitioners, but that public relations practitioners also believed that the intentions of

journalists were to report only about the negative aspects of the organization: "We are

like two hostile opposition camps. We do not trust each other. We expect that the

other party will try to manipulate and persuade us about things that do not exist."

Lack of Media Independence

The third effect of communist propaganda on the work of public relations

practitioners was unethical behavior of the media or what Participant H labeled as

media corruption. Participant C said that many media organizations served as

"megaphones of certain political and economic interest groups." Participant H, who

worked for a state agency, described a situation in which a certain agency's policy

decision was widely criticized in one newspaper. The inclination of editorials

corresponded with one political party's stance opposing the decision of the agency.

The published articles were not authored by individual reporters or a team of

reporters; the articles represented an anonymous editorial opinion of the newspaper.

The articles were not factually accurate. The state agency's public relations

practitioner contacted the newspaper several times to provide the publication with

information that was accurate, but all efforts by the public relations practitioner were

rejected. None of the articles included comments from the agency. Participant E also

described a situation in which media organizations had unethical connections with political parties and political interest groups:

> Before the last parliamentary election a political party reports that it has spent, let's say, one million Lats [Latvian currency] on advertising. You monitor what appears in the media and you discover that the actual value of the advertising cannot be more than 200,000 Lats. Where is the rest of the money? You start to analyze and you see that a popular radio program is hosted by a member of the same political party, or a general interest magazine interviews this party's candidate or the same party's candidate suddenly cooks porridge in a popular TV cooking show. Commercial [private] TV and radio channels do not need to reveal their income from advertising, but everybody knows that they accept money from political parties.

Also, Participant D believed that political public relations was one of the areas that had been affected the most by traditional communist propaganda. The same participant believed that the only concern of political parties in Latvia was to get elected. In order to achieve their goal, the parties used any means available.

Other elements of media corruption were the tokens and incentives that reporters accepted from private enterprises and government institutions. Participant H had observed that international companies invited reporters to visit their headquarters in other countries and paid the travel expenses. Reporters were driven in the cars of the state officials to attend the events that they later reported on. Reporters had dinners at upscale restaurants in Rīga with public relations practitioners from private enterprises that were paid by these enterprises. Furthermore, because reporters'

salaries were very low, they conducted paid seminars for public relations practitioners about how their media organizations function. Participant H shared her concern:

> Public relations is affected by the journalist's level of professionalism. The weaker journalists are, the more difficult it is to practice honest public relations. It is easier to pay for expensive dinners, send flowers and presents. However, at this point the relationship between the reporter and public relations practitioner becomes personal. Once you have a personal relationship it is impossible for the reporter to express professional criticism.

Participant H described another element of media corruption. A newspaper started to report about illegal actions of the company's management, but soon the reporting stopped. In a few days Participant H noticed that the company had bought considerable advertising space in the same publication.

Unwillingness to Disclose Information

The fourth effect of communist propaganda on the field of public relations in Latvia was *withholding of information*. Participant E found that information was used as a tool of power:

> Information is perceived as a valuable asset. Information is power. After conducting a communication audit in two different enterprises I concluded that when middle-level management receives information from senior management it uses the information as an instrument of power—I am better than you because I know something that you do not. It is a heritage from Soviet-style thinking. Information gives you power to manipulate and

influence people. Consequently, it causes distrust and dislike toward those who have the information.

Participant F also referred to information that was known only by members of the "old boys club," but did not reach other parties in the organization. The participant emphasized the continuing importance of personal connections that were formed during the Soviet years.

Continued Involvement of Communist-Trained Propagandists

Fifth, the remaining influence of the old style communist propaganda on contemporary public relations was *people who were a part of the communist propaganda system*. Participant A believed that many members of faculty that currently are teaching public relations at Latvian universities and colleges had been former propaganda disseminators for the Communist Party. Therefore, Participant A did not think that current higher education in public relations had any value to her. Participant A also believed that the security departments of banks and insurance companies tended to employ former KGB agents. Although these former agents were not directly involved with the function of public relations, they influenced how the organization communicated. Participant A described a crisis situation in which the director of a security department was a primary contact person in the enterprise:

We have a crisis situation. There is a fire on the company's premises. We call the director of security. He does not want to speak to us. He has been taught never to discuss anything with anybody. How can you expect him to tell anything to a public relations specialist? We have informed him [the director of security] how to communicate but it does not matter. . . . He tells us that

everything is all right. Then the reporters start calling. They [reporters] can

see that there is something going on. If there is smoke, how can you tell the

reporters that nothing has happened? We [public relations practitioners] need

to know what, where, when, why, and if there are any victims . . . but how can

we do it?

Although most of the participants distinguished between propaganda and

public relations, two of the participants believed that both of them represented the

same phenomenon. Participant A believed that propaganda was public relations that

was targeted toward certain audiences; "the only difference is that now [after the

breakdown of the Soviet Union] we consider what target audiences think." Participant

G said that the practitioners of both communist propaganda and of Western public

relations may use manipulation of information as a tactic to deliver their messages.

Public Relations and Transformation

This section provides answers to the fourth research question—how, if at all,

transformation public relations applies to public relations activities in Latvia. Seven

of the participants—A, C, E, G, H, I, and J—said that public relations had helped

society to undergo changes from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned

market economy to a free market economy in Latvia. Three of the participants—C, E,

and I—did not think that during the transformation public relations activities were

planned strategically. Participants A, B, and J believed that transformation and the

development of public relations occurred simultaneously, but independently from

each other. Participants D and F were not certain about the relationship between

public relations and transformation. However, later in the interviews, they were able

to give specific examples of the ways in which the function of public relations had helped with political and economic transformation.

The interviews revealed that *certain political and economic developments were necessary for public relations to evolve*. Both political and economic developments and their effects on the field of public relations will be discussed in the following two subsections. Several participants believed that the role of public relations was to *re-introduce Latvia abroad* after it regained its independence from the Soviet Union. Therefore, this role of public relations is discussed in the third subsection. The fourth subsection of this section reviews *how public relations could have helped the society to deal with the negative consequences of the political and economic transformation*.

Public Relations and Political Changes

Participants A, B, C, and I explained that the development of public relations became possible only when changes from totalitarianism to democracy occurred. Participant I suggested that the existence of democracy allowed the conditions for public relations to emerge, whereas the existence of public relations indicated that the totalitarian regime had been removed.

Participants B, C, and I related political transformation with the first independence movements in Latvia in late 1980s. Participants B and C suggested that the first major public relations activity was the human chain, the *Baltic Way*, that was organized by the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian national liberation movements on August 23, 1989. M. Huang (1999) described the *Baltic Way* as a protest action against Soviet rule that was organized to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the

signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, "a secret Nazi-Soviet agreement, which soon led to [the] occupation and illegal annexation [of the three Baltic States] by the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] (M. Huang, 1999, ¶ 2). More than one million Balts linked hands from Tallinn to Vilnius through Rīga, covering 600 kilometers or 372 miles.

Participant B believed that although nobody knew about public relations in the occupied Baltic States at the time, the event obtained a lot of national and international publicity in the media because the organizers had good intuition, knowledge about social processes, and personal contacts. Participant C viewed the first activities of the independence movement as two-way communication that was based on the personal belief of the members of the movement that Latvia needed to regain its independence:

> The Popular Front of Latvia[2] just talked about the idea. They told other people
> what they believed in. They tried to convince other people that independence
> is the right thing for us. They tried to make people think about it . . . whether it
> is good or bad. They tried to involve people . . . encourage them to participate.
> They did it in a two-way manner because they knew that a lot depended on
> popular support.

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[2] According to Wikipedia (n.d.c), the Popular Front of Latvia (*Latvijas Tautas Fronte*) was a political organization established to increase the autonomy of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (Latvian SSR) within the Soviet Union on October 9, 1988. The Popular Front of Latvia changed its position requiring Latvia's full independence from the Soviet Union on May 31, 1989, after the leadership of the Soviet Union refused to listen to the Front's requests for cooperation. The Popular Front was strongly opposed by hard-line communists; however, the Front received broad support from moderate members of the leadership of the Latvian SSR.

Participant I believed that public relations educated the society about democracy and introduced such new concepts as public hearings and discussions among local municipalities and the government and various state agencies. Participant I concluded: "Now we learn how to discuss issues and make decisions by interacting with each other. Nobody is giving us one-sided announcements—here is the decision and now you must implement it."

Public Relations and Economic Changes

In addition to the development of democracy, several participants—C, E, F, H, and J—suggested that the development of a free market economy was also necessary for public relations to emerge. Participants B, E, I, and J suggested that *the free market competition* determined the need for public relations. Participant E explained: "Public relations helped with transformation, but not because somebody planned it [public relations]. The free market economy and competition required the use of public relations as an instrument in order to survive in the new competitive conditions." Besides competition, Participant F suggested that the *development of various industries* was a necessity for the development of public relations. Participant F illustrated his proposition by describing a communication program that Participant F's public relations agency managed for an international credit card company. During the Soviet years credit cards were not used in Latvia; therefore, the society was not familiar with the concept of credit cards. The goal of the company's communication programs was to educate the society about credit cards; however, the communication program could not be successful until the credit card industry started to develop, i.e.,

electronic transactions became available—ATM machines were installed, businesses started accepting credit cards, and so forth.

Although the role of public relations could have been more significant, participants C, E, F, H, and J believed that the function of public relations was present in the following three activities of economic transformation. All three of the activities corresponded with the goals of transformation public relations proposed by Ławniczak (2001). First, public relations helped to explain the process of privatization; second, public relations assisted in gaining public acceptance for the concept of private property; and, third, public relations activities were involved in attracting foreign investments to Latvia.

Explaining the process of privatization. Participants C and H believed that the information campaign about how to use privatization vouchers[3] was one of the first and most effective of the communication activities that were related to the process of privatization. Both these participants found that the most essential part of this campaign was an educational television program *Mine Will Be Mine* that was produced by the Latvian Privatization Agency[4] and aired on Latvian Television's Channel 1 once a week over the period of nine years. According to the program's producers Rubess, Matulis, Kolāts, Grasis, and Skurbe (2004), the goal of the program was to explain the essence of private property reform. A popular Latvian

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[3] The government distributed privatization vouchers to the citizens of Latvia in September of 1993. Most of the vouchers were distributed according to one's length of residence in Latvia; one year was worth one voucher or $42. Vouchers were distributed to grant Latvian citizens the right to purchase farmland, city land, apartments, and shares in former state-owned enterprises (Latvia, n.d.).

[4] The Latvian Privatization Agency is a state-owned non-profit organization established on April 22, 1994. The goal of the Privatization Agency was to execute the privatization of state-owned property in Latvia. The Privatization Agency implemented privatization through public offerings, international tenders, GDR programs, and foreign investments (Latvian Privatization Agency, n.d.).

actor hosted the program and through interviews with privatization experts informed Latvian citizens about how to obtain privatization vouchers, use them, and open share accounts. The viewers mailed in questions that were answered in subsequent programs. The Latvian Privatization Agency estimated that in 1998 the program was watched by 210,000 viewers, i.e., every tenth resident in Latvia.

Participant C described the advantages of the Privatization Agency's communication campaign:

> The Privatization Agency informed the people how to participate in privatization . . . what to do with vouchers . . . how to use opportunities created by transformation. You received papers [privatization vouchers] and you had to decide how to invest them. Some people privatized their apartments, some invested in shares . . . some others who were especially skillful purchased vouchers from others and then privatized several apartments and many other forms of property. Almost every family privatized an apartment.

Although Participant C found *Mine Will Be Mine* to be one of the most effective communication programs in Latvia during transformation, Participant C also believed that some of the communication activities regarding privatization occurred too early in the transformation. Because at the time people had too many personal social and economic hardships, they were not interested in economic processes. Participant C suggested that now, when the country's economy has stabilized and a new generation has become economically active, educational campaigns about the institutions of the free market economy should be repeated systematically.

Participant H suggested that unethical communication techniques were also employed to disguise the process of privatization from the general public. By the later stages of privatization, most of the citizens had already invested or sold their privatization vouchers to speculators for less than their original value. Economic interest groups that were linked with the government and political parties used these opportunities to buy the vouchers in large quantities for a price that was much lower than the original. Such economic interest groups invested the vouchers for their original value in enterprises that still were not privatized. Participant H illustrated:

Why was real currency not used to sell profit generating state-owned enterprises? Money would have been a much bigger contribution to the state's budget. Nobody explained. The goal of those involved in privatization was not to clarify, but to make the process more shady. If the media reported something about it, the economic interest groups sought help from public relations agencies that had personal connections with representatives of political parties. The public relations agencies engaged in unethical lobbying and did everything to satisfy the needs of the economic interest groups.

Gaining acceptance for the concept of private property. The second public relations activity that the participants related to economic transformation was implemented by individual enterprises that needed to work in the new-free market conditions. Participants C, F, and J believed that each enterprise had to explain to their internal and external publics what a free market and competition meant, what was the essence of private enterprise, and what products or services these could offer. Participant F suggested that a large part of society in Latvia benefited from the

communication activities of one enterprise, e.g., if a bank wanted to encourage customers to take loans, it had to educate the society at large about the process of lending.

Participant J found that each private enterprise also had to communicate with its internal publics, such as employees. Participant J explained that workshops and meetings were organized to motivate employees and to explain how the private ownership of the enterprise would affect their employment in the future:

Transformation required modernization in former state-owned enterprises. Communication was used to motivate employees to acquire new knowledge about new technologies in order to maintain their employment. They [employees] knew that if they did not learn new things, they would be laid-off and that modernization always comes with extensive lay-offs.

Public relations and foreign investments. Transformation also opened the door for international companies in Latvia. Participants A, C, F, and J agreed that the foreign companies were the first organizations to use public relations to introduce themselves and their products to the Latvian market.

Participant J believed that public relations was used to attract foreign investments to Latvia. The participant suggested that these activities included working with the company's publics internationally and locally. International programs involved communication with the potential investors abroad; whereas, local communication programs were targeted towards "strengthening the client's [the enterprise that wants to attract foreign investments] position in the local market in

order to maintain its good reputation. Foreign investors always want to know how the enterprise is perceived locally."

Participant C had worked with communication programs that involved explaining how new foreign investments will open new job opportunities for local employees in Latvia. Participant C found that the general attitude about foreign investments is negative in Latvia: "People think that international companies want to abuse us and gain profit for themselves" without taking any responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Participant C believed that in order to gain trust from the local publics, foreign companies would need to develop communication programs that inform and educate the Latvian society about their goals and operations in Latvia.

The personal experiences of participants C and J revealed that many foreign investors were not willing to understand the local situation. Participant J found that international companies lacked understanding about "the special features of the Latvian market." Participant C's description was similar:

In their home countries they consider that people here [public relations practitioners in Latvia] are just implementators of their programs. We are not allowed to make any decisions. Here [in Latvia] they have only one office of distribution. In my experience, there has not been a single case where the enterprise [a local branch of an international company] was interested in its customers. . . . If their products were consumed, then everything was ok. I think that they do not want to understand the local customers. Their only concern is to make sure that their products are bought. They do not look for good relationships with their customers.

However, Participant F, who had also worked with international companies in Latvia, believed that those local practitioners, who had the necessary expertise and knowledge, were allowed to contribute to the communication programs of their international clients.

Re-Introducing Latvia Abroad[5]

Another public relations activity that participants related to transformation was the *re-introduction of Latvia abroad*. Participants A, C, and E believed that this activity is a responsibility of the Latvian Institute[6], a government-established agency. The three participants agreed that the work of the Institute had been insufficient. Participant A found that "Latvia has bad publicity. The Latvian Institute does not do anything. They make brochures, but that is not what they are supposed to do." Participant E believed that the Latvian Institute had not been effective because the Institute is under-funded:

> The Institute's annual budget is 80,000 Lats [$146,788]. . . . I am not surprised that the country's image is catastrophic. In Europe people tend to think that Latvia is a small, corrupt country with women that can be bought . . . where roads are in a horrible condition . . . and the costs of telecommunication services are unbelievably high. The state needs to find resources and do something to change this image.

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[5] The term "re-introducing Latvia abroad," not "introducing Latvia abroad," is used to indicate that Latvia was an independent and internationally recognized state before the Soviet Union occupied it in 1939.

[6] The mission of the Latvian Institute is to "provide information to the global community about Latvia and its people" (Latvian Institute, n.d.b, ¶ 1).

Participant F also found that the lack of resources in the state's budget had not allowed strategic planning and implementation of public relations activities.

Only Participant J proposed that individual companies could contribute to the public relations activities aimed at re-introducing Latvia abroad. This participant had implemented a communication program to find new markets for a Latvian food manufacturer's products. The main goal of the communication program was finding potential distributors for the manufacturer's products in other countries. The communication activities involved personal contacts with the officials from Latvian embassies abroad and the development of informational materials about the products.

Public Relations and Social Implications of Transformation

The interviews with participants A, B, C, E, F, I, and J revealed that public relations could have assisted Latvian society dealing with negative implications of the transformation such as tension among various social groups, unemployment, and loss of health and retirement guarantees (Cox & Mason, 1999). However, the participants believed that the function of public relations was not used effectively in the beginning of and during the transformation. Participants E, G, and J explained that the role of public relations could have been more prominent than it was had it not been that the lack of public relations experts in Latvia hampered the achievement of that more prominent role. Participant E named the lack of financial resources as another obstacle that restrained communication between the newly privatized enterprises or the state institutions and their publics. Only two participants—E and F—had any direct personal experience with communication programs that involved social reforms. Both participants said that the implementation of these communication

programs had been required by international organizations such as the World Bank and the European Union, which provided funding for the programs.

The interviews revealed two main parties that should have initiated and communicated about the negative consequences of the transformation. These two parties are, first, governmental institutions and, second, non-governmental organizations formed by the members of the society.

Communication as a government's responsibility. Participants B, C, E, F, and I believed that communication about negative social implications of the transformation is the responsibility of the government. Participant B found that the government officials who made decisions regarding economic transformation did not discuss these decisions with the society:

> It [economic transformation] was almost like propaganda. The elite announced that now everything will be privatized and it is not disputable. The society was given a false hope that, from now on, everybody will be rich. Everybody will own a property. Everybody will live like in Hollywood movies. People believed it. . . . Now, that privatization has happened and for many people nothing has changed, a significant part of society feels like "losers."

Participant B believed that the lack of communication created good soil for populist politicians, those who got elected by using slogans such as "through privatization everything was stolen from the people." Consequently, the populist leaders gained political power and slowed down the processes of political and economic transformation. Participant F found that the instability of the successive Latvian

governments and their frequent policy changes did not permit long-term planning of communication programs in support of health and welfare reforms in Latvia.

Participant I saw public relations as an instrument that opens and facilitates discussion between the state and the society about important governmental decisions. Participant I believed that before it starts to communicate with its publics, each ministry needs to be aware of what its publics are, especially if the ministries need to engage such special interest publics as pensioners, abused children, new mothers, people with disabilities, and so forth.

Participant C believed that the government should use public relations to educate employees of new private enterprises about how paying taxes could help to ensure health and pension guarantees for them in the future.[7] Participant E found that the government must detect the roots of the social problems and solve them. The function of public relations alone cannot prevent the negative consequences of the transformation if the main causes of the problems are not removed:

> Public relations is not a solution. The government should search for and find
>
> the solution. Public relations can help to minimize social tension, but only if
>
> there is something to communicate about. Public relations specialists can
>
> consult the government in the same way that lawyers and human resources
>
> people do, but public relations cannot offer the ultimate solution to the
>
> problem.

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[7] Here Participant C referred to a common practice in Latvia to deduct taxes from a minimum salary that employers are required to pay their employees by law. The rest of the salary is paid in cash and does not contribute to the state's budget. Consequently, the taxes deducted from the minimum salary do not provide sufficient coverage for the employee's health expenses and retirement in the future.

Furthermore, two of the participants—E and J—suggested that the enlargement of the European Union would cause a new wave of negative social implications. Participant J explained that before the enlargement, the government's communication activities were insufficient. Only the positive aspects of the enlargement were emphasized. Negative consequences such as inflation were concealed. Participant J described how one of the clients, a food manufacturer, was affected by the changes:

> The government did not explain how the European Union would affect the food industry. Suddenly production costs for food manufacturers increased dramatically. Farmers demanded bigger payments for raw materials such as milk. Electricity became more expensive. In order to survive, they [food manufacturers] had to increase the prices of their products. And here I am . . . indirectly involved in a social project. I, as a public relations practitioner, who represents a company, need to explain to an average consumer in Latvia why everything is becoming more expensive.

The role of non-governmental organizations. Participants A, C, and E suggested that non-governmental organizations are another important group that should engage in communication about the negative implications of transformation. Participant C suggested that people should become publicly active by establishing non-governmental organizations in order to discuss their problems and pressure the government to find solutions to these problems. Participant C believed that after the collapse of the Soviet Union many people lost their jobs and fell into depression:

Much should be done to help motivate people. I look at my family . . . after

the breakdown of the Soviet Union everything collapsed for my parents. I

remember the day in 1994 when Rubles [Soviet currency] were exchanged to

Lats [Latvian currency]. My mother's 3,000 Rubles shrank to 15 Lats . . .

from all her life's savings my mother could only afford to buy me new shoes.

On that day my parents fell into depression. They did not know how to live in

the new situation. Until today many people have not crawled out of the abyss

that the changes threw them in. . . . Non-governmental organizations are

essential. They would let people participate in public life and give them a

chance to speak out about what they want. NGOs [non-governmental

organizations] are the essence of a civic society. Politicians must listen to

NGOs . . . that is why people join groups. They want to be heard. Public

relations should be used to facilitate the development of the NGO sector.

People need to realize that they can have influence . . . that something depends

on them.

Participant E had a similar opinion. The participant believed that the society should

communicate with the state through non-governmental organizations. These groups

could facilitate communication with the state by using public relations techniques

such as lobbying, media relations, discussions, and face-to-face meetings with

officials from various ministries.

Although Participant A thought that non-governmental organizations could

help society deal with the negative implications of transformation, this participant

found that the current number of non-governmental organizations is very small in

Latvia. Participant A described the reason that the number of non-governmental organizations is so low: "They [people in Latvia] do not have time to think about social problems and NGOs; they have to solve their personal problems in the first place." However, Participant A predicted that once the basic needs of people are satisfied; more people will get involved in the public life.

Additional Characteristics of Public Relations in Latvia

In this part of the thesis the additional characteristics that describe public relations in Latvia are reviewed. The first part of this section discusses the first developments and practitioners of public relations in Latvia. The second part of this section describes four aspects that were specific to Latvia and affected the work of public relations practitioners in the country. The aspects included the small size of Latvia, political inconsistency, unprofessional media organizations, and division of the media.

Development of Public Relations in Latvia

Participants D, E, F, and J believed that the field of public relations started to develop in the mid-1990s in Latvia. Participants A and C traced the development of public relations to the late 1980s when Latvia was still a part of the Soviet Union, suggesting that the first public relations activities were performed by the Latvian independence movement. The public relations activities of the independence movement were discussed in another section titled *Public Relations and Transformation*.

International organizations and public relations. Participants D, E, and F suggested that international organizations were the first to employ contemporary

public relations both in the public and private sectors in Latvia. Participants E and F, who worked for public relations agencies and managed accounts for international private businesses, acknowledged that the first clients were international companies such as car dealers, beauty, and hygiene product distributors. Participant D suggested that public-sector organizations also learned about public relations through projects funded by intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and The United Nations. These projects required implementation of communication programs.

First public relations practitioners. Participant B distinguished between two types of public relations practitioners. Participant B labeled the first type of practitioner as "nature's children"—the early public relations practitioners. These practitioners had minimal or no knowledge about the field; but they had good intuition, understanding about social processes, and good contacts. In the late 1990s the second type of practitioners—the professionals—appeared. The professionals had formal undergraduate or graduate education in public relations or similar disciplines. The appearance of the professionals decreased the number of "nature's children." Participants D and E also believed that the first public relations practitioners were self-taught and preceded the practitioners with formal education in public relations.

Although participants B, D, and G believed that the professionals increased the standards for the field, six participants—C, E, F, H, I, and J—thought that a lot still needed to be done to strengthen and maintain these standards. Participant J suggested that the current high demand for public relations services provided many opportunities for unprofessional practitioners to create misconceptions about the field.

Participants D, E, F, and J believed that the practitioners who followed the professional standards had been able to increase the awareness and understanding about the role of public relations among the members of the organization's management. Participant D said that "businesses start to listen to and trust public relations practitioners." Participant F, who represented a public relations agency, believed the increased understanding about public relations had encouraged the clients to require elaborate services and distinguish among the publics of the organization. Participant E found that crisis situations have helped organizations to learn about the value of public relations. This participant believed that although companies still tended to use public relations as a "fire extinguisher," the companies often learned from their mistakes and "start[ed] taking public relations seriously and invest[ed] in long-term planning of public relations programs."

The second part of this section describes the four aspects that were specific to Latvia and influenced the practice of public relations in the country. Each aspect is discussed separately.

Aspects Affecting the Practice of Public Relations in Latvia

Small size of Latvia. Five participants—A, B, C, D, and F—believed that the small size of Latvia had influenced the practice of public relations. The interviews with the participants identified two ways the small size of the country contributed to public relations. First, because Latvian companies employed small numbers of people, participants B, D, and F believed that public relations practitioners had an opportunity *to* communicate directly with the senior management. Participant F

explained: "Everything is small in Latvia. We can get direct access to the very top."

Participant D had a similar opinion:

> In many enterprises the owner and the manager is the same person . . . he [or
>
> she] is involved in everything. One person supervises all operations. This
>
> person cannot fail to be involved in public relations. He [or she] cannot avoid
>
> communicating with the public relations specialist.

> Participants B and D suggested that the opportunities for public relations

practitioners to communicate directly with the senior management would decrease,

once businesses started to experience economic growth and become bureaucratic.

However, Participant F suggested a different outcome. This participant believed that

the economic growth of private enterprises would contribute to the field of public

relations. The growth will require increasing the standards for public relations

practitioners; otherwise, the organization's senior management will not value

practitioners without experience and knowledge about public relations.

The second way the small size of the country contributed to the field of public

relations was through *low distance among people*. Participant B described the

situation:

> In the United States people see politicians only during the election period. For
>
> the rest of the time communication between the politicians and the society
>
> occurs through the media. . . . In Latvia it is different. As soon as a politician
>
> leaves his [or her] office building, he [or she] is on the streets among regular
>
> people. When you are at the Dome Square in Rīga, you see well-known
>
> politicians everywhere. . . . Also, the society is very connected. Every family

in country has a relative in Rīga. The chain of acquaintances is very short. If I

knew somebody in Town X and you were from the same town, it would take

us less than 10 minutes to find a mutual acquaintance or somebody who

knows this or that person.

Participant B believed that low distance among people contributed to

transparency of communication activities: "The environment provides you with a

quick feedback . . . . People hear about what you did very fast and they tell about it to

each other. These narratives influence how the organization is perceived in public."

Participant C, who also admitted that low distance among the people affected

public relations, believed that the effects were negative. Organizations avoided

disclosing information or emphasized only the positive aspects of their performance.

Participant C explained: "The active part of the business is so small that everybody

understands from a half word who you are talking about. Competition is tough. This

environment does not facilitate open communication."

Political inconsistency. The second aspect that affected the practice of public

relations in Latvia was the frequent changes of government. Participants B, D, and J

agreed that the changes did not allow them to plan public relations programs

strategically. Participant F believed that the changes were especially hard for those

public relations practitioners who worked with governmental communication

programs. The participant explained that each new government changed the political

agenda; therefore, communication programs also needed to be changed. Participant B

characterized the situation as: "The Cabinet of Ministers changes so often. Each new

prime minister has different goals and priorities. We [public relations practitioners]

constantly need to be alert in order to follow everything that happens." Participant D also found that the biggest challenge for public relations practitioners was the need to adapt to the changes immediately.

Participant J, whose public relations agency serviced international companies in Latvia, suggested that the political inconsistency made the coordination of communication programs with the same company's branches and headquarters in other countries complex. In countries with more established democracies, the procedures to develop communication programs were more standardized than in Latvia. Therefore, Participant J's colleagues in other countries could not understand the last-minute changes that Participant J was required to make because of policy changes in Latvia.

Unprofessional media organizations. The third aspect that described public relations in Latvia was unprofessional reporters. Participants A, B, G, H, I, and J suggested that reporting was inaccurate and unethical. Participants B and H found that the media distorted facts. Participants G, H, and I believed that experienced journalists left the media and became public relations practitioners. Consequently, only inexperienced and unprofessional reporters stayed with media organizations.

Participant G found two reasons why reporters quit the media to join the field of public relations. First, public relations practitioners were better paid than journalists. Second, the field of public relations had a higher status than journalism. Participant G explained: "If you are a public relations practitioner, you don't need to run around like a puppy. You sit in your nice cozy office and journalists come to you."

Division of the media. The fourth aspect that distinguished public relations in Latvia from other countries was division among the media. Participants distinguished between two categories of the media. The first category was Latvian versus Russian media. The second category was national versus regional media.

Participants A, B, and D distinguished between the *Russian and Latvian media* and the ways these two types of the media affected the practice of public relations. Participants B and D suggested that the audiences of the Latvian and Russian media did not overlap; therefore, public relations practitioners needed to communicate with Latvian and Russian audiences separately. Participant B characterized the situation as follows:

In Latvia half of the media is Latvian and the other half is Russian. We [public relations practitioners] need to use different approaches to communicate with Latvian and Russian audiences. We write press releases in two languages. If Russians receive a press release in Latvian, they do not read it. To motivate them to read the press release, we write it in Russian. . . . Often the issues that are discussed in Russian newspapers are not known to Latvian audiences. The Russian audiences do not participate in public and political life . . . . We [Participant B's public relations agency] have clients that are not interested in the Russian audiences. These audiences do not exist for them.

Participant D also acknowledged that the media relations programs that she worked with did not include the Russian media. The participant believed that because of Latvia's geographical location next to Russia: "Public relations practitioners

should pay attention to the Russian media. We live here. We have to accept that our society is ethnically diverse. It will not change."

The second category that participants described was the difference between the *national and regional media*. First, participants H and I believed that public relations practitioners had a closer relationship with the regional media than with the national media. As Participant I characterized the situation: "The number of media organizations in each region is small. The relationship with the regional media is more intensive [than with the national media]. Regional journalists are more engaged in local matters [than national] and they are truly interested in what happens in the region."

Second, participants H and J believed that the national media was more specialized than the regional media. The regional media were general and did not emphasize any area or industry. Participant H related that when the representative of Participant H's agency communicated with the regional media, they also learned about the competencies of other state agencies that were dealing with similar issues. Answering questions from the regional reporters was essential in order to ensure that the regional publics gained the same access to the state agency's services as the publics in the main business center, i.e., the capital Rīga.

Third, Participant H found that the *communication channels* that the regional and national media tended to use were different. The national media preferred e-mail, whereas the regional media liked to receive information through regular mail or fax.

Fourth, Participant J believed that the *style of language* employed to communicate with the both types of the media was different. Participant J described

the difference: "For the national media I use rational arguments based on facts and figures . . . for the regional media my information is more emotional. I try to find something that would provoke personal feelings. The regional media are not focused on rational arguments."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study about the status of public relations in Latvia answers the four

research questions proposed in the *Conceptualization*. First, the interviews with the

ten participants reveal that public relations practitioners in Latvia practice each of the

four models of public relations. The press agentry and public information models

dominate; nevertheless, the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models also are

practiced.

Second, the study discovers several factors that determine the public

practitioner's choice of public relations models. These factors include the educational

and professional backgrounds of the public relations practitioners, standards for the

profession, the organization's communication goals, and the type of organization.

Third, the conversations with the participants of this study reveal that

communist propaganda has influenced the practice of contemporary public relations

in Latvia. Fourth, public relations has contributed to the processes of political and

economic transformation. The field also has the potential to assist society in Latvia to

deal with the negative social implications of transformation if the right

communicators are engaged in the process of communication.

In the further sections of the *Discussion* chapter the summary of findings,

suggestions for the future development of public relations in Latvia, implications for

the practice and theory of public relations, and strengths and weaknesses of this study

are described. The *Discussion* concludes with suggestions for future research.

Models of Public Relations

This study reveals that J. Grunig's (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) four models of public relations—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical—are practiced in Latvia. These findings are similar to these results obtained by public relations scholars in other countries (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Y. Huang, 1990; Karadjov, Kim, & Karavasilev, 2000; Lyra, 1991; Sriramesh, 1991; Verčič, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1996). The press agentry and public information models dominate in Latvia. The two-way asymmetrical model is practiced, but this model is employed less frequently than the press agentry and public information models. The two-way symmetrical model is the least-practiced model. None of the ten participants practices just one model of public relations. Each participant engages in communication activities that are characteristic of several models.

L. Grunig et al. (2002) proposed four dimensions of public relations—symmetry versus asymmetry; one-way versus two-way; mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics. These four dimensions guided this study by determining what models are employed by public relations practitioners in Latvia.

Asymmetry Versus Symmetry

On the continuum from asymmetry to symmetry, asymmetrical communication dominates. Most of the participants propose asymmetrical *communication goals* such as publicity, informing the public about the organization, and persuading the publics of the organizations to behave in ways favorable to the organization. These goals correspond to the press agentry, public information, and

two-way asymmetrical models of public relations. Organizations with symmetrical communication goals engage in two-way communication with their publics in order to facilitate understanding between the organization and its publics.

The *planning of public relations programs* is also asymmetrical for most of the organizations. The practitioners develop communication programs to reach the business goals of the organizations, but do not include the interests of the organization's publics in the communication plan. The planning process of symmetrical communication programs involves consultations with various parties inside and outside the organization, the presence of research activities, and the involvement of the senior management. The involvement of the senior management is especially important and influences the way public relations is practiced in the organization. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) described the management's understanding about public relation as the schema for public relations: "The way in which senior managers define and understand public relations" (p. 301).

One-Way Versus Two-Way Communication

The second dimension of public relations describes the direction of the organization's communication activities, i.e., one-way versus two-way. The public relations practitioners in Latvia engage in both one- and two-way communication with their publics. Six participants prefer one-way communication over two-way communication; whereas, the remaining four participants choose two-way communication over one-way communication.

One-way communication involves publicity, creating a positive image for the organization, and informing the publics about the organization. *Two-way*

communication activities involve coalition building with other organizations, issues

management, relationship maintenance with the organization's publics, exchange of

information between the organization and its publics, and so forth.

Mediated Versus Interpersonal Communication

The third dimension that describes the use of public relations models is

mediated versus interpersonal communication. All ten participants employ mediated

communication to reach the publics of their organizations. The *goals of mediated*

communication are publicity, image-making for the organization, and informing the

publics about the organization. All but one participant also employ *interpersonal*

communication to interact with their publics. The goals of interpersonal

communication are to build coalitions with other organizations in order to lobby or

solve mutual problems, learn about the expectations of the organization's publics,

communicate with the organization's management, interact with the organization's

internal and external publics, and so forth.

Ethics

The fourth dimension of public relations describes the extent to which the

practice of public relations is ethical. The ethical concerns of the participants involve,

first, the *interaction between public relations practitioners and media organizations*.

Public relations agencies secretly pay various media to report "news" about the

organizations with the goal of gaining favorable publicity for their clients in the

media. Media organizations are affiliated with political and economic interest groups.

Therefore, these media organizations report information favorable to these groups.

Also, the same person owns a media organization and a public relations agency,

giving the clients of this person's agency a large exposure in the media organization

owned by this person.

The second ethical concern involves *inter-related interests of business and non-governmental organizations*. Businesses, especially pharmaceutical companies, secretly hire non-governmental organizations to lobby the interests of these companies.

The third group of ethical concerns is related to the *lack of discussion about ethics among public relations practitioners*. The low level of professionalism of the practitioners and severe competition for clients among public relations agencies do not make it possible for public relations practitioners to hold open discussions about ethics. The professional public relations associations also do not facilitate education of practitioners. Public relations practitioners and students of public relations believe that the field is inherently unethical.

Choice of Models of Public Relations

As the previous discussion about the models of public relations demonstrates, the public relations practitioners in Latvia choose the press agentry and public information models over the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models. Several factors determine the dominance of the one-way models.

Educational and Professional Backgrounds of Public Relations Practitioners

Only two of the ten participants have formal education in public relations. Six of the ten participants are former journalists who joined the field of public relations when it began to develop in Latvia. The interviews with the participants reveal that this trend is not common only among the participants of this study; the participants

acknowledge that most of their fellow practitioners are also former journalists. The journalistic backgrounds of the public relations practitioners combined with the personal connections that these practitioners have with their former colleagues in the media limit the function of public relations to writing press releases and disseminating information about the organization to the media.

Six participants acknowledge that they lack the knowledge to conduct research. This absence of research skills restricts these practitioners from engaging in two-directional and symmetrical communication with the publics of their organizations.

The findings of this study correspond with what J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) described as the "potential of the public relations departments" (p. 300). If public relations practitioners, especially the managers of public relations, have knowledge and training in public relations, the practitioners have a greater potential to practice the two-way symmetrical model than practitioners without knowledge and training. The lack of knowledge and training of public relations practitioners in Latvia may hinder them from employing the two advanced models of public relations.

Lack of Professional Standards among Public Relations Practitioners

The second obstacle that inhibits the practice of the two-way symmetrical model in Latvia is the lack of professional standards among public relations practitioners. The two public relations associations do not facilitate dialogue about the professional standards for public relations practitioners; public relations practitioners and students of public relations believe that the field is inherently unethical, and this misconception allows the practitioners to justify their unethical practice of public

relations. Participants believe that the standards of the profession can not be raised until the competition for clients among public relations agencies is strong, and businesses are still trying to find their niche in the market.

From One-Way to Two-Way Models

Although the press agentry and public information models dominate among public relations practitioners in Latvia, the two-way models are also practiced. These models are employed if the public relations practitioners identify, first, a *specific problem* that the organization faces, and second, the public relations practitioners identify a *specific public* that the organization could engage in communication.

Choice between Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Communication

Several factors determine the choice between the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models. The first factor is the asymmetrical or symmetrical nature of the *organization's communication goals*. The asymmetrical goals involve persuasion of the organization's publics; organizations with symmetrical goals try to facilitate dialogue with their publics.

The second factor that determines which of the two-way models is practiced is the *type of organization.* The private-sector organizations prefer the two-way asymmetrical model; the public-sector organizations choose the two-way symmetrical model.

Effects of Communist Propaganda on Contemporary Public Relations

The study reveals that most of the participants, with only two exceptions, believe that before the collapse of the Soviet Union public relations was not practiced in Latvia. The two participants whose answers differ suggest that public relations and

communist propaganda represent the same phenomenon. They believe that public relations techniques could also be employed to achieve the unethical goals of communist propaganda.

The observations of the eight participants who believe that public relations was not present in the soviet Latvia correspond with the findings of two groups of researchers who studied public relations in other post-soviet countries—Slovenia (Verčič et al., 1996) and Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000). These groups of researchers found that although propaganda was employed to deliver messages from the Communist Party to masses, a free exchange of information between the state and the society did not exist. Verčič et al. (1996) discovered that propaganda did not value communication. The main purpose of propaganda was to "dissolve communication between people in order to disable their ability to form publics" (p. 42). Karadjov et al. (2000) found that society was not familiar with concepts such as "dissent," "alternative thinking," and "public discussion" in soviet Bulgaria (p. 210); therefore, an open exchange of information could not occur.

Several studies in post-communist countries revealed impacts of communist propaganda on public relations. Karadjov et al. (2000) discovered that public relations practitioners manipulate information in Bulgaria. Public relations practitioners devote a disproportionately large effort to media relations in Poland and Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000; Trębecki, 2001). Taylor (2000) observed that public relations practitioners are required to pay the media to ensure the appearance of public service announcements in the media such as the introduction of a new community service, forums for political candidates, educational activities, and cultural programs. Guth

(2000), Hiebert (1994), Karadjov et al. (2000), Lucas-Bachert (1991), and Tampere (2001) found that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region lacked educated and professional pubic relations practitioners. The vacuum was filled by former propaganda disseminators.

This study about public relations in Latvia also reveals that communist propaganda has affected the way public relations is practiced in this country. Five main effects are found.

Lack of Communication and Decision-Making Skills

First, post-communist society in Latvia lacks basic communication and decision-making skills. Karadjov et al. (2000), who described Bulgaria before the fall of communism, also observed that "dissent," "alternative thinking," and "public discussion" do not exist in Bulgaria. The interviews with the participants in Latvia reveal that old, one-directional speech patterns and slogans are still an effective way to deliver information to different social groups in Latvia. Discussion and reasoned arguments are not necessary.

Lack of Trust between Public Relations Practitioners and the Media

The second effect of communist propaganda is the lack of trust between public relations practitioners and journalists. Public relations practitioners suggest that journalists distrust them and assume that public relations practitioners manipulate information about their organizations. The distrust is mutual. Public relations practitioners do not find journalists reliable. Participants believe that members of the media distort facts and report only the unfavorable aspects of their organizations.

Lack of Media Independence

The third effect of communist propaganda is the lack of media independence or, as one of the participants names it, "media corruption." One participant characterizes some media organizations as "megaphones of certain political and economic interest groups." Media corruption involves activities such as the media's refusal to publish opposing viewpoints about an issue or policy, anonymous editorials with distorted facts, affiliations with political and economic interest groups, tokens and incentives that journalists accept from businesses they report about, and discontinuation of negative reporting about a business enterprise after the enterprise invests in advertising with the same publication.

The second and third effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations—lack of trust between public relations practitioners and the media and lack of media independence—involve the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media. This relationship is a very important part of conducting public relations because of the significant role that public relations practitioners assign to publicity, image-making, and reputation. The importance of media relations is also found in Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000) and Poland (Trębecki, 2001), two other post-soviet countries.

Withholding of Information

The fourth effect of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations is the unwillingness of the organization's management to disclose information to other employees in the organization. This effect corresponds to what Tampere (2001) described as the propagandistic approach to public relations in post-communist

Estonia. She wrote: "A secret worldview dominates and actual communication is minimal. If a message is sent to the public it . . . serves the interests of the management giving an inadequate representation of what is actually happening in the organization" (p. 210). A participant in this study finds that middle-management uses information as a tool of power to hide information from the organization's employees, who are on the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. The participant describes the reasons that information is withheld from others: "I am better than you because I know something that you do not." Another participant uses the American term "old boys club" to describe the consequences of communist-style thinking to demonstrate the ways the organization's management excludes employees from its communication. Withholding of information corresponds to what J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) described as the closed-system organizational culture where communication is asymmetrical and those in power view symmetrical communication as a threat to their power.

Continued Involvement of Communist-Trained Propagandists

The fifth effect of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations is the continued involvement of communist-trained propagandists in the decision-making positions of some organizations. These former supporters of communist propaganda are not directly involved with the function of communication, as studies in other post communist countries, e.g., East Germany (Lucas-Bachert, 1991), Hungary (Hiebert, 1994) have demonstrated; nevertheless, the communist-trained propagandists influence the work of public relations practitioners by withholding and manipulating information.

One of the reasons why the field of public relations may not have experienced direct involvement by former propaganda disseminators may have to do with the historic development of public relations in Latvia. The interviews with public relations practitioners reveal that early public relations-like activities were performed by members of the first independence movement in the late 1980s. The movement was against the soviet occupation of Latvia; therefore, people who conducted communication for this movement or who became the first public relations practitioners opposed soviet-style manipulation.

The only direct involvement of communist propaganda disseminators in the field of public relations is observed by one participant who suggests that the former functionaries of the Communist Party teach communication classes at some institutions of higher education in Latvia. This factor does not encourage the new generation of public relations practitioners to enroll in formal college education programs and therefore may hinder the professional growth of the field in Latvia.

Transformation and Role of Public Relations

As the previous section on the effects of communist propaganda reveals, a free exchange of information between different groups with the society did not exist in the soviet Latvia. The development of contemporary pubic relations was traced back to the early public relations-like activities of the first independence movement in the late 1980s. Similarly to Ławniczak, Rydzak, and Trębecki (2003) findings in Poland, the development of contemporary public relations in Latvia started with the political and economic transformation.

Although most of the participants in this study believe that public relations has

helped society in Latvia to undergo changes from totalitarianism to democracy and

from a planned market economy to a free market economy, the participants suggest

that during the early stages of transformation public relations activities were not

planned. As Participant B explains: "It [transformation] was a political decision. It

was not disputable. . . . The elite announced that now everything will be privatized

and it was incontestable." The need for public relations arose only when the

transformation was already in progress.

Political and Economic Transformation

The study finds that several political and economic conditions were necessary

for public relations to evolve in Latvia. These conditions were not present during the

soviet occupation.

Political transformation. Public relations could contribute to the political

transformation only after *political rights such as freedom of speech* were permitted in

the Soviet Union during the period of glasnost.[8] Several participants in this study

view the human chain, the *Baltic Way*, organized by the Estonian, Latvian, and

Lithuanian national liberation movements to protest the soviet occupation on August

23, 1989, as the first major communication activity that employed public relations

techniques.

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[8] The Russian term "glasnost" means openness. Mikhail Gorbachev, the soviet leader, introduced the
term in 1985 to pressure conservative members of the Communist Party to open economic
restructuring of the Soviet Union. Glasnost facilitated freedom of speech in the Soviet Union. The
media became less controlled by the Communist nomenklature. Many political prisoners were released
(Wikipedia, n.d.a).

Economic transformation. The interviews reveal that the use of public relations in the economic sector occurred later than communication activities associated with the political transformation. The participants do not provide any examples of contemporary public relations practiced during the economic perestroika[9] that occurred during the same time period as the political changes associated with glasnost. The later free market developments of the early 1990s created the need for public relations. The study reveals that two free market elements—*competition* and *development of industries*—contributed to the development of contemporary public relations.

Ławniczak (2001) in Poland found six goals of public relations during transformation. First, the goal of public relations in the former state-owned enterprises was to gain the employee's and society's acceptance for the restructuring and privatization of these enterprises. Second, in new, privately-owned enterprises public relations was employed to "secure public acceptance for the concept of private property" (p. 16). The third goal of public relations in Poland was to encourage the public to use the free market institutions such as stock exchange, banks, and national investment funds. Fourth, public relations helped foreign companies to gain public acceptance for their investments in Poland. The fifth goal of public relations was to attract potential foreign investors. The sixth goal included promoting the newly independent country abroad through support from international financial

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[9] The term "perestroika" was also implemented by Gorbachev. Perestroika means economic restructuring. In 1987 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union passed several laws and policy changes such as the Law on State Enterprises permitting state enterprises to determine the output of their production based on demand from their consumers; the Law of Cooperatives authorized some forms of private ownership (Wikipedia, n.d.b).

organizations, foreign investments, and integration in the supranational structures of the West.

Although communication of economic changes was not planned strategically in Latvia, the conversations with the public relations practitioners reveal that public relations contributed to Latvia's economic transformation. Four categories of contributions are found. First, public relations has helped the government to *explain the process of privatization*. Several participants suggest that the Latvian Privatization Agency's informational campaigns about how to use privatization vouchers has been one of the most effective public relations campaigns in Latvia. The participants emphasize the significance of the educational television program, *Mine Will Be Mine*, that was broadcast on Latvian Television Channel 1. The goal of the program was to explain the concept of private property and how Latvian citizens, who owned privatization vouchers, could become owners of real estate, land, and other forms of property.

The participants also identify two negative aspects of the communication activities during privatization. One participant believes that communication regarding privatization occurred too early; therefore the society in Latvia that was burdened by too many personal economic and social hardships was not open to this information. The participant suggests that now—when Latvia has experienced economic growth and development of democracy and a new generation has become economically active—a new campaign to explain the institutions of the free market economy should be conducted. Another participant finds that, during the process of privatization, unethical communication techniques were employed to conceal illegal activities of

economic interest groups that had unlawful affiliations with officials in the government.

The second way public relations has supported the economic transformation was by assisting new private enterprises to *facilitate acceptance for the concept of private property*. Each private enterprise had to explain the essence of private ownership to its internal and external publics. One participant believes that the communication activities of one enterprise benefited the society at large. For example, if a bank wanted to encourage customers to take loans, the bank had to educate the society about the process of borrowing.

Third, public relations has assisted transformation by *attracting foreign investments* to Latvia. One of the participants, who had been directly involved in attracting foreign investments to Latvia, believes that public relations activities occurred on two levels—local and international. Local programs involved strengthening the organization's position in the local market through management of the company's reputation. International programs involved communicating about the organization to investors abroad.

Several participants suggest that this task was very challenging because the public in Latvia had a negative attitude toward foreign investments. As one participant describes it: "People think that international companies want to abuse us and gain profit for themselves."

Two participants believe that foreign businesses are not willing to learn about the local norms and traditions. Foreign companies do not understand, as one participant explains, "the special features of the Latvian market." Yoder (2000), who

studied the unification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall, believed that direct transplantation of the West institutions and market economies into the eastern part of Germany was inefficient. The East German society needed to make "sociocultural adjustments" (p. 115). As Yoder explained, the encroachment of Western values "could have serious implications for building trust in the new system" (p. 134). The unwillingness of international companies to make the "sociocultural adjustments" in Latvia may have caused the negative attitude and distrust towards foreign investments.

Another participant, who had worked with international companies in Latvia, believes that the reason why international companies do not want to learn from local public relations practitioners is that these practitioners lack experience and education. The participant thinks that local practitioners, who have knowledge about public relations, are allowed to contribute to communication programs of the international companies in Latvia. The positive experience of this participant and the increased number of foreign investments in Latvia may add another aspect to public relations in Latvia. In the future public relations practitioners can perform the function of "cultural interpreters" by explaining the local culture to the management of multinational organizations (Lyra, 1991). The interviews with the participants reveal at least two aspects that may be unique to communication in Latvia and therefore known only to local communication practitioners. These aspects are political inconsistency and the division of the media. Political inconsistency includes frequent changes of governments that do not permit strategic planning of public relations programs. The division of the media includes differences between the Russian and

Latvian media and the national and regional media. The audiences of the Russian and Latvian media do not overlap and the ways to communicate with the national and regional media differ.

Fourth, the participants agree that public relations could have contributed to the *re-introduction of Latvia abroad*; however, several external conditions hinder this goal of transformation public relations. Three participants believe that this public relations goal should be an organized function of a state agency, the Latvian Institute. The participants agree that the communication activities of the Institute have not been satisfactory. Two participants find that the Institute is under-funded and the third participant believes that people employed by the Institute lack skills to effectively manage communication.

Only one participant suggests that individual companies could contribute to Latvia's re-introduction abroad. This participant helped a Latvian food manufacturer to introduce its products in another country by producing informational materials about the company's products and communicating with the officials from Latvian embassies abroad.

Social Implications of Transformation

Cox and Mason (1999), who studied the process of transformation in East Europe, found that in addition to the political and economic transformation, the post-soviet countries experience changes in their social structures. Transformation causes social consequences such as broadened social inequalities among social groups that emerged after privatization, unemployment, and a loss of retirement and health

guarantees. These social implications cause social tension within the East European societies.

In the *Conceptualization* section of this thesis I proposed that transformation public relations could have reduced social tensions by employing techniques such as issues management (J. Grunig, 1992) and boundary spanning (White & Dozier, 1992). The public relations practitioners who participated in this study in Latvia agree that the function of public relations could have assisted society in Latvia dealing with negative implications of the transformation. However, the lack of public relations experts and financial resources inhibit the use of public relations in overcoming the negative social consequences of the transformation.

The public relations practitioners identify two parties that they believe should have initiated communication about the negative social implications of the economic transformation. These parties are discussed below.

The role of government. First, the participants believe that communication about the negative implication of economic transformation is the responsibility of *the government*. The communication activities that the participants assign to the government include the need to engage the publics of each government's ministry in discussions about the problems that these publics face, especially greatly disadvantaged publics such as pensioners, abused children, new mothers, and people with disabilities. One participant believes that the government should employ public relations to educate employees of private enterprises about the importance of paying taxes to provide funds to strengthen the health and pension systems in Latvia.

Two participants find that the government does not engage in open communication about the negative social and economic implications that emerged after Latvia joined the European Union. The governmental communication activities emphasize the positive aspects but the negative consequences such as inflation are concealed.

The role of non-governmental organizations. The second group that the public relations practitioners suggest should have helped society in Latvia to communicate about the negative social consequences of transformation is non-governmental organizations. Several participants believe that non-governmental organizations are able to empower people and pressure the government to find solutions to social problems. The participants agree that non-governmental organization should employ such asymmetric communication techniques as lobbying, publicity, discussions, and face-to-face meetings with officials from various ministries. These activities correspond to what Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, and Themba (1993) described as media advocacy:

> A strategy . . . for influencing public debate and putting pressure on policy makers by increasing the volume of the public . . . voice and, in turn, by increasing the visibility of values, people, and issues behind the voice. . . . Media advocacy is . . . about making sure that the story gets told from a public . . . point of view. (pp. 2-3)

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) also suggested that activist groups should use media advocacy to minimize any imbalance of power.

Future of Public Relations in Latvia

Although the findings of this study demonstrate that the participants prefer the press agentry and public information models in Latvia, the conversations with the practitioners reveal that the potential for symmetrical practice of public relations does exist. I also discovered several factors that hinder symmetrical communication.

Factors Facilitating Symmetrical Communication

The study reveals seven factors that could contribute to the advancement of symmetry in public relations. Each of the factors is discussed below.

Filling the knowledge gap. The first indicator that demonstrates the potential for symmetry is the change from the first public relations practitioners or so-called "nature's children," whose knowledge about public relations is based on intuition, good understanding about social processes, and personal contacts, to practitioners with formal education and training in public relations. In addition to the new generation of practitioners, the "nature's children" who do not have formal education in public relations, are willing to learn about the profession by attending continuous education classes. As the analysis of the effects of communist propaganda reveals, public relations did not exist in the Soviet Union; the first public relations practitioners did not have opportunities to obtain formal education in the field. However, they have recently tried to fill the gap when educational opportunities became accessible.

Deepened schema for public relations. Second, the professional growth of the practitioners facilitates the understanding about public relations among the members of the organization's management. As one participant described: "Businesses start to

listen and trust public relations practitioners." The understanding about public relations encourages management to require that the organization's public relations practitioners perform diverse public relations activities, distinguish among the different publics of the organization, and conduct long-term planning of public relations programs. These changes deepen what L. Grunig and J. Grunig (1992) called the organizational schema for public relations. The knowledge and experience of public relations practitioners are direct contributors to this expanded schema for public relations among members of the organization's management.

Current examples of symmetrical communication. Third, the interviews with the participants indicate that the two-way symmetrical model is already practiced in Latvia. These findings confirm that Latvian public relations practitioners have knowledge and skills to practice the symmetrical model. These practitioners may serve as examples for other practitioners and contribute to the professional growth of the field.

Stabilization of the business environment. The fourth factor that could benefit symmetrical public relations is stabilization of the business environment. The results show that the public-sector organizations prefer the symmetrical model; whereas, the private-sector organizations practice the two-way asymmetrical model. These findings may support the prediction of one participant that the private-sector organizations such as public relations agencies and business can not practice the two-way symmetrical model because businesses and public relations agencies experience severe competition for clients and need to find their niche in the market. The public-

sector organizations that practiced the two-way symmetrical model do not need to compete with other organizations.

Small size of the country. The fifth factor that may contribute to the symmetrical practice of public relations in Latvia is the small size of the country. Two aspects describe the small size of the country—small organizations and low distance among people.

First, because organizations are small in Latvia, public relations practitioners have an opportunity to engage in direct communication with senior management. L. Grunig at al. (2002) found that access to senior management empowers public relations practitioners. Although two participants suggest that when the enterprises experience economic growth and become bureaucratic, the number of opportunities to communicate directly with the management will decrease, the direct communication patterns established earlier may help to overcome the obstacles created by growth and bureaucratization of the enterprises. One of the participants believes that the growth and bureaucratization of the enterprises are positive factors that will require public relations practitioners to increase their professional standards; the management of successful organizations will not value practitioners without experience and knowledge about the field.

Second, in addition to the small organizations, another way the small size of the country could benefit symmetrical communication is through low distance among people. As one participant explains: "The chain of acquaintances is very small. If I knew somebody in Town X and you were from the same town, it would take us less than 10 minutes to find a mutual acquaintance or somebody who knows this or that

person." Low distance among people could contribute to transparency of communication activities—an essential element to increase the status of the profession and resolve ethical problems such as concealed payments to the media to ensure publicity for the organization.

Potential for symmetry. The sixth factor that may stimulate a further development of public relations is the potential for communication programs with symmetrical goals, e.g., programs that facilitate understanding between society in Latvia and international companies through "cultural interpreting" (Lyra, 1991). As one participant indicates, society in Latvia has negative attitudes toward foreign investments. Society does not trust foreign companies and believes that these companies are in Latvia to gain profit for themselves at the expense of people in Latvia. Several participants agree that the international companies are not willing to understand the local situation. If these foreign companies plan long-term business presence in Latvia, they would need to engage their local publics in communication and employ local public relations practitioners to explain, as one participant says, "the special features of the Latvian market."

Role of non-governmental organizations. The seventh factor that may help to advance symmetrical communication is the understanding among the participants that non-governmental organizations could be an essential channel through which the citizens gain power, voice their concerns, and engage the government and businesses in a dialogue. The role of non-governmental organizations is especially important in order to communicate about the negative implications of the economic transformation and their effects on the social groups within the society.

Factors Hindering Symmetrical Communication

Although most of the participants agree that the field of public relations has demonstrated growth towards professionalism, a majority of the participants also acknowledge that a good deal needs to be done to strengthen and maintain these advancements. Several factors that hinder the symmetrical practice of public relations emerged during the interviews.

Frequent changes of government. The first factor that could hinder the development of public relations is thought to be the political inconsistency of the Latvian government. The frequent changes of the government do not allow strategic, long-term planning of public relations programs. Each new government proposes a new political agenda; therefore, communication programs that involve the government policies also need to be changed. These changes are an especially hard burden on those practitioners who work with the government's communication programs.

Political inconsistency also complicates the coordination of communication programs between Latvian branches of international companies and branches or headquarters of those companies in other countries. The public relations colleagues in other countries can not understand the last-minute changes that practitioners in Latvia have to implement because of policy changes.

Lack of media professionalism. The second factor that the participants find as an obstacle towards the advancement of the field is unethical and unprofessional media organizations. Some media organizations report inaccurate information and distort facts. Furthermore, experienced journalists leave the media and become public

relations practitioners because the salaries of public relations practitioners are higher than the journalists' salaries.

This problem of the media ethics and its significant effect on public relations demonstrates the publicity and exposure goals of organizations in Latvia. These communication goals encourage unethical media behavior and hinder public relations practitioners from practicing the symmetrical model of public relations that emphasizes a direct exchange of information between the organization and its publics.

Misconceptions about public relations. The third factor that inhibits the symmetrical practice of public relations is the assumption held by public relations practitioners and students of public relations that the field is inherently unethical. This misconception does not encourage the professional and ethical growth of the profession. The assumption allows public relations practitioners to justify their unethical behavior. The lack of strong professional associations also does not facilitate the clarification of this misconception.

Deficiencies of educational programs. The fourth obstacle to the development of public relations in Latvia includes three types of deficiencies in the educational programs in public relations. First, many members of the faculty are former journalists and lack understanding about the diverse aspects of public relations. Second, some educators are former disseminators of propaganda for the Communist Party. Third, public relations education does not provide skills necessary for the real-life requirements of the field.

Lack of trust. The fifth obstacle to symmetrical public relation is the lack of trust among the parties involved in communication. This obstacle is a direct result of

the earlier communist propaganda. Public relations practitioners distrust journalists and vice versa. Management uses information as a tool of power and does not disclose the information to others in the organization, and organizations employ former supporters of communist system who are not directly involved with communication but nevertheless hinder an open exchange of information between the organization and its publics. J. Grunig and Y. Huang (2000) believed that "trust highlights one's confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 44). Until communicators find ways to trust each other, the implementation of symmetrical communication may be hindered in Latvia.

Implications of the Study on Theory and Practice of Public Relations

This study provides several implications for the theory of public relations and other disciplines. I also discovered implications for practitioners of public relations. Theoretical implications are discussed below.

First, this study adds the Latvian perspective to the global theory of public relations and suggests conclusions about the development and practice of public relations in a society recovering from communism. The study views the development of public relations through the eyes of public relations practitioners in Latvia, describes their observations, and voices their concerns.

Second, this research takes an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of public relations and contributes to other disciplines such as political science, economy, and social development to explain the changes in East Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The findings of this study may assist other countries

undergoing similar changes to employ public relations to communicate about the negative social consequences of the transformation.

Third, the study in Latvia contributes to the theory of intercultural communication by describing how political and historic events have shaped the approaches to communication. Factors such as the influence of communist propaganda, political and economic transformation, and social implications of the transformation contribute to the way public relations is practiced in Latvia.

Fourth, this study adds a small country's perspective to the theory of public relations. Many studies have been conducted in countries with large populations, such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The low distance among people and the small size of Latvian organizations have an impact on ways organizations and individual members of society communicate.

In addition to theoretical implications, the study discovers several suggestions for practitioners of public relations. These suggestions conclude this section.

First, the interviews with the participants reveal several problems that hinder the development of public relations in Latvia. These problems involve unethical behaviors of public relations practitioners and the media, the conflict between public relations practitioners and journalists, low professional standards, and so forth. Because of severe competition and lack of initiatives from professional associations, the participants do not believe that open discussion among practitioners about these problems is possible. This study demonstrates that the problems the practitioners face are common and need to be addressed to facilitate further development of the field.

Second, the study embeds public relations in the context of political and economic events of the past. This approach to public relations may help local and international practitioners, who plan to conduct public relations in Latvia, to understand the ways communist propaganda and transformation have affected communication in post-communist Latvia.

Third, as the description of transformation in the *Conceptualization* chapter demonstrates, political, economic, and social changes are still occurring in Latvia. The findings of this study can assist the current public relations practitioners in developing communication programs that deal with the negative implications of transformation and engaging the publics of organizations in symmetrical communication about these changes.

Fourth, the study identifies those factors that facilitate and hinder symmetrical communication and the development of public relations. Knowledge about these factors can help public relations practitioners to improve the effectiveness of their communication programs, save human and monetary resources, and identify the organization's problems and publics.

Strengths of the Study

The first significant strength of this study is its qualitative nature and the chosen research method, i.e., qualitative interviewing. This method provides the study with in-depth data about the experiences of public relations practitioners in Latvia. The long interviews with the participants supply first-hand observations and personal accounts from practitioners who directly participated in the development of public relations in Latvia.

The second strength of this study is exemplified by the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the participants. The participants are affiliated with public relations agencies, and work for private businesses, government organizations, and regional municipalities. The diversity of the participants provides the study with a wealth of perspectives on the status of public relations in Latvia. The emerging common patterns among the participants indicate that the study has reached its "saturation point" when the "participants knowledgeable about the subject . . . repeat the same events and the same variety of interpretations" (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 1995, p. 73.).

Limitations of the Study

This study, as any other qualitative study, does not allow generalizations about the phenomenon researched. The findings describe only the experiences of the participants. However, the "saturation point" of the accounts of the participants, despite the diversity of their experiences and professional affiliations, suggests that the study outlines some general characteristics about the status of public relations in Latvia.

The study may be influenced by the researcher's personal perceptions such as the belief that symmetrical communication is the most effective and most ethical form of public relations. However, similarities between the experiences of the participants and similar findings of other researchers in other countries suggest that this study identifies some patterns about public relations in Latvia.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study provides suggestions for future research in public relations. First, the region of East Europe has been one of the least-researched regions of the world. Several studies have been conducted in Slovenia (Verčič et al., 1996), Poland (Ławniczak, 2001; Trębecki, 2001), Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000), and so forth; however; these studies do not allow conclusions about the status of public relations in the region. An inclusive and comparative study describing public relations in post-communist societies would contribute to the global theory of public relations.

Second, this study discovers several characteristics that describe public relations in Latvia. However, the qualitative nature of this study does not allow generalizations about the overall development of the field in Latvia. A quantitative study using a larger sample of participants may contribute to a more complete characterization of public relations in Latvia.

Third, this study reveals what models of public relations the participants choose to practice in Latvia. Another study examining the influence of other generic principles (Verčič et al., 1996) such as gender and diversity of public relations practitioners, roles of public relations practitioners, and specific application of public relations (Verčič et al., 1996), e.g., culture and the extend of activism, may add other aspects to the description of public relations in Latvia.

Fourth, during the interviews the distrust between public relations practitioners and journalists emerged. This study examines this conflict only from the point of view of public relations practitioners. To clear the misconceptions and

facilitate the understanding between the two professions, another study examining the experiences and attitudes of journalists must be conducted.

Fifth, several participants believe that the development of contemporary public relations started with the first independence movement in Latvia in the late 1980s. The role and influence of this movement should be studied to learn about the history of public relations in Latvia and the ways this history has shaped the practice of public relations. This research would be especially important because of the wide support that this movement gained from publics at large and its significance in the fight against communist occupation.

Sixth, a study describing the education programs in communication would benefit to the future development of public relations in Latvia. Understanding about public relations education would contribute to the growth of the field and to professional standards.

Seventh, the interviews with the participants reveal that public relations practitioners and students of public relations believe that the field is inherently unethical. A study exploring the causes of this perception and the ways this perception affects the practice of public relations in Latvia would contribute to the professional growth of public relations in Latvia.

APPENDIX A

E-Mail of Solicitation

Dear Ms./Mr. _____,

My name is Baiba Pētersone. I am a master's student at the University of Maryland. Currently I am conducting a study about the status of public relations in Latvia.

I am writing to invite you to participate in two interviews for this study. Your experience in public relations would be a great contribution to it. The goals of the study are, first, to explores how public relations is practiced in Latvia; second, how, if at all, communist propaganda has affected contemporary public relations; and third, how, if at all, public relations has assisted society to undergo transformation from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned market economy to a free market economy. Your participation in the study would include two 90-minute face-to-face interviews at a place and time convenient for you between August 16 and September 4.

Your participation in this study will be confidential. Your name and the name of your organization will not appear anywhere in this study. I promise that I will respect your choice not to answer questions and share information that you find confidential.

I truly hope that you will be able to participate in this study. I am convinced that your experience and achievements would significantly contribute to the study

about public relations in Latvia. Please let me know if you are interested to assist me to learn about public relations in Latvia. I will be delighted to answer any questions regarding the study and my educational and professional backgrounds.

Thank you in advance! I look forward to hearing from you!

Gratefully,

Baiba Pētersone

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The goal of the study is to learn how public relations is practiced in Latvia. Please help me to achieve this goal by answering the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Your thoughts and experiences are important to me.

This interview is confidential. Your name, the name of your organization and the names of your client organizations will not appear in my final report.

Part I (*first interview*)

1. Please describe your educational and professional background.

2. What does public relations mean to you?

> *Probe*: From your experience, how would you define public relations?

> *Probe*: From your experience, what kind of activities does the term "public relations" include?

3. Please describe the public relations programs that you work with.

> *Probe:* What kind of public relations activities do these programs include?

> *Probe:* What are the goals of these public relations programs?

> *Probe*: Why are these programs important?

4. Based on the information that is available to you, please describe the public relations programs that other public relations practitioners in your organization work with.

> *Probe*: What public relations activities do these programs include?

Probe: What are the goals of these public relations programs?

Probe: Why are these programs important?

5. How does your organization/your client organization plan public relations activities?

Probe: Please describe the process of planning.

Probe: What are the goals of the planning process?

Probe: Who is involved in the planning of public relations activities?

6. From your experience, what activities does public relations research include?

Probe: How does your organization/your client organization conduct research?

Probe: What are the goals of your research programs?

Probe: When do you conduct your research? Before you start a new program? Throughout the program? After you complete the program?

Probe: Why do you think research is needed/is not needed?

7. Who are your most important publics?

Probe: Why are these publics important?

Probe: How often do you communicate with these publics?

Probe: Please describe your organization's/your client organization's communication programs with these publics.

Probe: Please describe the relationship between your organization/your client organization and these publics.

Probe: How does your organization/your client organization maintain the relationship with these publics?

8. James Grunig identified four models of public relations. [*Show the interviewee a handout that describes each of the models*]. What models does your organization/your client organization practice most extensively?

    Probe: From your experience, please give me a specific example in which the most extensively used model was practiced.

9. Why do you think your organization/your client organization practices this model or these models most extensively?

10. Why do you think the four models of public relations are or are not applicable to Latvia's situation?

11. From your experience, how has the use of the public relations models changed during your career in public relations?

    Probe: Please describe the changes.

    Probe: Why do you think they occurred?

12. Can you think of any other models that would describe the practice of public relations in Latvia?

    Probe: What are these models? Please describe them.

    Probe: Why do you think these models are suitable to Latvia's situation?

    Probe: Why do you think these models describe Latvia's national peculiarities?

    Probe: Why do you think these models are important?

Part II (*second interview*)

13. Throughout the years of the Soviet occupation, the Communist Party used propaganda to manipulate the society. How has the propaganda tradition in the past influenced the practice of public relations today?

> *Probe*: What comes to mind when you think about the communist propaganda?

> *Probe:* Why the communist propaganda has had or has not had an effect on the practice of public relations in Latvia?

> *Probe:* From your experience, please give me an example of a situation in which your professional activities have been affected by the consequences of the former communist propaganda.

14. Did public relations performed any role in the transformation from totalitarianism to democracy?

> *Probe*: If yes, please describe the role of public relations in the transformation process.

> *Probe*: What public relations activities were performed to fulfill this role?

> *Probe*: Have you been personally involved in the transformation process? How?

15. Did public relations performed any role in the transformation from the communist command economy to the market economy?

> *Probe*: If yes, please describe the role of public relations in the transformation process.

> *Probe*: What public relations activities were performed to fulfill this role?

Probe: Have you been personally involved in the transformation process? How?

16. Ławniczak (2001) identified six main goals of public relations during the transformation. These goals included:

16a. to secure acceptance among workers and society for restructuring and privatization of state-run enterprises.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has the public relations department of your organization or your agency been involved in securing acceptance among workers and society for restructuring and privatization of state-run enterprises? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

16b. to ensure public acceptance for the concept of private property in privately owned business.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has the public relations department of your organization or your agency been involved in securing public acceptance for private property in privately owned business? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

16c. to encourage public to use such "new" market economy institutions as stock exchanges, banks, national investment funds.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has your organization or your agency been involved in encouraging public to use the "new" market economy institutions? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

16d. to gain public acceptance for foreign capital.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has your organization or your agency been involved in gaining public acceptance for foreign capital? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

16e. to attract potential foreign investors.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has your organization or your agency been involved in attracting potential foreign investors? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

16f. to promote the country abroad by securing the support of international financial institutions, attracting foreign capital, and achieving acceptance for attempts to integrate with the West within existing supranational structures.

Probe: Why do you agree or disagree with this goal?

Probe: From your experience, what public relations activities have your organization or your client organizations performed to achieve this goal?

Probe: Has your organization or your agency been involved in promoting the country abroad? How?

Probe: Please give me an example of a specific public relations activity that was performed to reach this goal?

17. From your experience, how, if at all, did public relations help the society to deal with such social implications as unemployment, a loss of retirement and health guarantees, social and economic inequalities among different social groups that resulted from the transformation?

> *Probe*: Please give me an example of a public relations activity that you or your colleagues performed to deal with these social implications.

18. From your experience, how, if at all, was public relations used to communicate with international organizations, foreign governments and corporations throughout the transformation?

> *Probe*: Please describe a public relations activity that you or your colleagues have performed to communicate with international organizations, foreign governments and corporations?

19. Does transformation public relations have any other goals in addition to the ones that I asked you about?

> *Probe*: If yes, what are these goals?

> *Probe*: Why are these goals important?

20. Is there anything else that I did not ask you but I should have asked you about the practice of public relations in Latvia?

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience with me. May I call or e-mail you if I have any additional questions? Would you be interested to receive an executive summary of my research? If you have any questions, please feel free to call my advisor Dr. Larissa A. Grunig at (301) 405 6532 or me at (301) 405-8265.

Descriptions of James Grunig's Public Relations Models (Grunig, 1992)

Press agentry/publicity model: One way model. Information is disseminated from the organization to the public. The main public is media. Research is not conducted. Propaganda is used to achieve an outcome that is beneficial to the organization.

Public information model: One way model. Information is disseminated from the organization to the public. Public relations practitioners are viewed as journalists in residence; the information is "truthful and accurate" (p. 288). Media is the main public. Research is not conducted.

Two-way asymmetrical model: Two way model. Research is used to understand what motivates organization's publics and how to produce messages that will make the publics to change their attitudes and behaviors according to the organization's goals. Persuasion is the primary goal of the public relations programs. Communication between the organization and its publics is imbalanced.

Two-way symmetrical model: Two way model. Research is used to promote understanding and an exchange of information between the organization and its publics. Dialogue, not persuasion, is the goal of public relations programs. Communication is ethical and balanced.

APPENDIX C

Coding Sheet

CATEGORY # 1: MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A.	**Dimensions of public relations**

	I. Asymmetry vs. symmetry
	           1. Asymmetrical communication activities
	                a) Public relations goals
	                b) Planning of public relations programs
	                c) Public relations research
	           2. Symmetrical communication activities
	                a) Public relations goals
	                b) Planning of public relations programs
	                c) Public relations research
	
	II. One-way vs. two-way communication
	           1. Lack of research activities—one-way communication
	           2. Presence of research activities—two way communication
	                 a) Goals of public relations research
	                      1) Asymmetrical
	                      2) Symmetrical
	                 b) Research methods
	                 c) Public relations activities
	                      1) One-way activities
	                      2) Two-way activities
	
	III. Mediated vs. interpersonal communication
	           1. Mediated communication
	                 a) Influence of former journalists
	                 b) Mediated communication activities
	
	           2. Interpersonal communication activities
	
	IV. Ethics
	           1. Mass media behavior
	                 a) Pre-paid news reports
	                 b) Political and economic aspirations of the media
	                 c) Conflicting ownership
	            2. Inter-relatedness of businesses and non-governmental organizations
	           3. Lack of discussion about ethics

B.	**Models of public relations**
	
	I. Asymmetry vs. symmetry
	     1. Communication goals
	          a) Publicity
	          b) Information
	          c) Persuasion
	          d) Dialogue
	     2. Planning of public relations programs
	          a) Asymmetrical
	          b) Symmetrical
	
	II. One-way vs. two-way
	     1. One-way activities—no research
	          a) Publicity
	          b) Information
	     2. Two-way activities—research present
	          a) Persuasion
	          b) Dialogue
	
	III. Mediated vs. interpersonal
	     1. Mediated
	          a) Publicity
	          b) Information
	          c) Persuasion
	          d) Dialogue
	     2. Interpersonal
	          a) Publicity
	          b) Information
	          c) Persuasion
	          d) Dialogue
	
	IV. Ethics
	     1. Concerns related with publicity
	          a) Relationship between public relations practitioners and the media
	          b) Inter-relatedness of businesses and non-governmental organizations
	     2. Lack of discussion about ethics

C.	**Choice of models**
	
	I. Backgrounds of public relations practitioners
	     1. Educational
	     2. Professional

	II. Lack of professional standards
	
	 III. One-way vs. two-way models
	          1. Identification of communication problems
	          2. Identification of publics
	
	 IV. Two-way asymmetrical vs. two-way symmetrical model
	          1. Communication goals
	          2. Type of organization

CATEGORY # 2: EFFECTS OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA

A.	Lack of communication and decision-making skills
B.	Lack of trust between public relations practitioners and the media
C.	Lack of media independence
D.	Unwillingness to disclose information
E.	Involvement of communist-trained propagandists

CATEGORY # 3: TRANSFORMATION PUBLIC RELATIONS

A.	**Public relations activities during political changes**
B.	**Public relations activities during economic changes** I. Privatization II. Private property III. Foreign investments IV. Re-introducing Latvia abroad
C.	**Public relations and social implications** I. Role of government II. Role of non-governmental organizations

CATEGOTY # 4: ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS DESCRIBING PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LATVIA

A.	**Development of public relations in Latvia**
	I. International Organizations
	II. Nature's children
	III. First professionals
B.	**Unique characteristics**

	I. Small size of Latvia
	        1. Direct access to management
	        2. Low distance among people

	II. Political inconsistency
	III. Lack of media professionalism

	IV. Division of the media
	        1. Russian vs. Latvian
	        2. National vs. regional

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Identification of Project/Title	The Status of Public Relations in Latvia
Statement of Age of Participants (parental consent needed for minors)	I state that I am 18 years of age or older and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Larissa A. Grunig, Professor, Department of Communication, 2116 Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635 and Baiba Pētersone, Graduate Student, Department of Communication, 2101E Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635.
Purpose	The purpose of the research is to learn how public relations is practiced in post-communism Latvia.
Procedures	The procedures involve participating in two face-to-face interviews about the status of public relations in Latvia that will last approximately 90 minutes each. The interviews may take place in the office of the participant, public places such as restaurants and libraries, or the home of the participant. With my permission, these interviews may be audio-taped. Several open-end questions will be asked about the status of public relations in Latvia; how, if at all, the former communist propaganda has affected the practice of contemporary public relation in Latvia; and how, if at all, public relations has helped Latvian society to transform from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned-command economy to a free market economy. Several sample questions are attached to this informed consent

	form (see page 3).
Confidentiality	All information collected in the study is confidential, and my name will not be identified at any time. I understand that, if applicable, the audio-tape of the interview will be kept by the Student Investigator for up to three years before it will be destroyed. Only the Principal and the Student Investigator will have access to my name. Data will be securely stored on floppy disks, audio-tapes, and typed written hard copies that will be locked in the Student Investigator's office. After five years the data will be destroyed by shredding, by erasing audio-tapes, and by deleting computer files and disk files.
Risks	I understand that there are no foreseeable personal risks associated with my participation.
Benefits	I understand that the interview is not designed to help me personally but that the investigator hopes to learn more about the status of public relations in Latvia.
Freedom to Withdraw, & Ability 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. If I withdraw I understand that any record of my participation will be destroyed.
Principal Investigator	Dr. Larissa A. Grunig, Professor, Department of Communication, 2116 Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635, (301) 405-6532, lg32@umail.umd.edu
Student Investigator	Baiba Pētersone, Graduate Student, Department of Communication, 2101E

	Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635, (301) 405-8265
Contact Information of Institutional Review Board (IRB)	If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact**: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-505-4212**
Obtaining a Copy of the Research Results	I understand that I may obtain a copy of the results of this research after May 31, 2004 by contacting Baiba Pētersone, , Graduate Student, Department of Communication, 2101E Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635, (301) 405-8265, b_petersone@yahoo.com

Printed Name of Participant   _____

Signature of Participant   _____

Date   _____

Initial here if you agree to have the interview taped _____

Sample Research Questions

1. Please describe your educational and professional background.

2. What does public relations mean to you?

    Probe: From your experience, how would you define public relations?

    Probe: From your experience, what kind of activities does the term "public

    relations" include?

3. Please describe the public relations programs that you work with.

    Probe: What kind of public relations activities do these programs include?

    Probe: What are the goals of these public relations programs?

    Probe: Why are these programs important?

4. Based on the information that is available to you, please describe the public

relations programs that other public relations practitioners in your organization work

with.

    Probe: What public relations activities do these programs include?

    Probe: What are the goals of these public relations programs?

    Probe: Why are these programs important?

5. How does your organization/your client organization plan public relations

activities?

    Probe: Please describe the process of planning.

    Probe: What are the goals of the planning process?

    Probe: Who is involved in the planning of public relations activities?

6. From your experience, what activities does public relations research include?

> *Probe*: How does your organization/your client organization conduct
>
> research?
>
> *Probe:* What are the goals of your research programs?
>
> Probe: When do you conduct your research? Before you start a new program?
>
> Throughout the program? After you complete the program?
>
> *Probe*: Why do you think research is needed/is not needed?

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