J. Grunig's Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Models of Public Relations: Contrasting Features and Ethical Dimensions

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Abstract—Issues surrounding the ethics and social responsibility of public relations are addressed here through a discussion of J. Grunig's distinction between asymmetrical and symmetrical organizational communication. His development of a research tradition for public relations is examined with particular attention given to conceptualizing organizations as political systems and exploring the contrasting presuppositions of asymmetrical and symmetrical models of communication. Symmetrical presuppositions are presented as an ethical and effective framework for public relations theory.

INTRODUCTION

IN May 1987, James E. Grunig delivered a paper to the Conference on Communication Theory and Public Relations at Illinois State University in which he compared and contrasted what he termed asymmetrical and symmetrical presuppositions as frameworks for public relations theory. [1] He contended that asymmetrical presuppositions about the nature and purpose of public relations have steered research and theory in a direction that is both ineffective and ethically questionable. As an alternative to an asymmetrical conceptualization of public relations, Grunig delineated an exciting and innovative program for public relations theory based on symmetrical presuppositions. An exploration of the contrasting features and ethical dimensions of Grunig's asymmetrical and symmetrical frameworks is the focus of this discussion.

According to J. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, L. Grunig, Repper, and White, public relations has historically been built on a worldview entailing a set of asymmetrical presuppositions that have rendered the practice less effective than it could be, given rise to unrealistic expectations for organizational communication, and limited the value of the function. [2] With a different worldview in mind, Grunig has developed a research tradition for public relations theory involving symmetrical presuppositions. The adoption of this worldview may allow organizations to conduct their communication programs in an ethical and more effective manner. Organizational communication based on symmetrical presuppositions suggests that public relations can be a "highly valued and effective force for resolving social conflict and improving the societies in which we live." [1]

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PRESUPPOSITIONS AND RESEARCH TRADITIONS

Up to this point, the terms *presuppositions* and *research* tradition have been employed to introduce the discussion of public relations frameworks. The use of these concepts here borrows from the work of science philosopher Larry Laudan, who included these terms in his explanation of how scientific knowledge progresses. [3]

Grunig has conceptualized presuppositions as the assumptions we make about the world and the values attached to those assumptions:

Presuppositions define the problems researchers attempt to solve, the theoretical traditions that are used in their research, and the extent to which the world outside a research community accepts the theories that result from research. [1]

These presuppositions are the subjective aspect of science that make scientists see the world and any phenomena being studied in a way that meshes comfortably with a scientist's own cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs. In short, presuppositions are like a particular pair of glasses we use to view our world.

Laudan includes presuppositions in his notion of a research tradition. He explained that, while specific theories within a research tradition can be tested, a research tradition and its presuppositions are "neither explanatory, nor predicitive, nor directly testable." [3] Instead, a research tradition

is a set of assumptions: assumptions about the basic kinds of entities in the world, assumptions about how those entities interact, assumptions about the proper methods to use for constructing and testing theories about those entries.

A research tradition provides "us with the crucial tools we need for solving problems" and "goes so far as to define partially what the problems are, and what importance should be attached to them." [3] Thus, the research tradition tells us what we should study and constrains us from studying phenomena not defined within or relevant to the research tradition. By providing guidelines for solving the problems within it, a research tradition suggests its own improvement and provides vital clues for theory construction. [3]

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In essence, Grunig has been the architect of a research tradition for public relations that supplants the prevailing conceptualizations of what public relations can and should do. This research tradition has developed from decades of scholarly activity in public relations and other fields of communication, organizational sociology, social psychology, cognitive psychology, and the philosophy of science.

Within Grunig's emerging tradition, persuasion is rejected as the ultimate goal of communication. In effect, the plethora of research and theory about communication and persuasion is deemed irrelevant. Instead, a symmetrical framework boasts accuracy, understanding, and agreement as effects of successful communication. [4] This revolutionizing worldview even goes so far as to tell us what theoretical knowledge is important to public relations scholars and practitioners. For example, theories that address effective negotiation principles are appropriate within the symmetrical framework while theories about coercion are not.

Grunig's efforts to sculpt a unique framework for understanding public relations are giving rise to a deep theory about the communication behavior of organizations. Tracing the research that developed this theory allows us to see the marked distinction between organizational communication stemming from an asymmetrical worldview and that flowing from a symmetrical worldview and, most important, the ethical questions that arise around this distinction.

If, as Laudan suggested, science is not wholly objective, but rather guided by pervasive traditions, the pervasive tradition in public relations has included the presupposition that the purpose of public relations is to bring the public's point of view in line with that of the organization. [1] Grunig stated that this purpose involves manipulating "the behavior of publics for the assumed, if not actual, benefit of the manipulated publics as well as the organization." [1] According to him, the worldview that includes this presupposition and the alternative worldview are described by four models of public relations that he introduced in Grunig and Hunt. [5]

MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

In his 1976 monograph [6], Grunig conceptualized two kinds of public relations behavior and asked the question, "Why do some practitioners engage in informative, two-way communication and others in one-way, manipulative communication?" He then categorized these two kinds of public relations using Thayer's concepts of synchronic and diachronic communication. [7] Grunig explained that synchronic communication is asymmetrical in that the organization uses public relations to

synchronize the behavior of publics with its own behavior. Diachronic communication, according to him, is symmetrical; an organization and publics attempt to reach a state of affairs that is acceptable to all.

Grunig later realized that his conceptualizations were too simple to explain the public relations behaviors and organizational structures that exist in the real world. In particular, he suggested that there seem to be four rather than two models of public relations in practice, and single organizations appear to practice combinations of the four models. [5]

According to Grunig, public relations behavior seems to vary along two independent dimensions—one-way versus two-way and asymmetrical versus symmetrical. Therefore, four models arise that represent combinations of the two dimensions:

- Press agentry/publicity (a one-way asymmetrical model). This model was typified by the wizardry of P. T. Barnum in the middle of the 19th century. [5]
 Within this model, little or no regard for the truth is the prevailing norm. Commonly referred to as "flacks" or "mouthpieces," practitioners of press agentry espouse their organization's or client's cause with the ends adequately justifying whatever means. The intent of public relations programs grounded in press agentry/publicity is persuasion and/or manipulation.
- Public information (a one-way symmetrical model).
 This model arose in the beginning of the 20th century from Ivy Lee's belief that public relations people were "journalists in residence" who should provide truthful and accurate information about their client organization. [5]

Grunig later reconceptualized this model as asymmetrical. According to him, practitioners following the public information model have the effect of manipulating publics even though that might not be their intent.

Two-way asymmetrical. This model had its intellectual roots in the work of the Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel, during World War I. Edward Bernays, who worked in a supporting role on the Creel Committee, later supplied most of the social science theory for the asymmetrical model.

Bernays believed that if public opinion could be engineered for evil purposes (for example, Nazis' use of propaganda to gain support for their goals), then public opinion could be engineered for the good of society. The ethical problem that arises with regard to this suggestion centers around the problem of who is to decide what is good for society. Within the two-way asymmetrical model, organizations believe that they can decide and then sell this decision to their publics.

¹ Accuracy is defined by these researchers as a communication effect in which one person has successfully reconstructed the other person's cognitive structure. Understanding occurs when two people have constructed a common cognitive structure. Agreement is a communication effect in which two people make the same evaluation based upon either a referent criterion (an attitude developed to resolve one situation that is applied in new situations) or a situational variable (an evaluation used in a single situation).

• Two-way symmetrical. The roots of this model cannot be as easily traced to the ideas of a single practitioner. Both Bernays and Lee had said that public relations should represent the client to the organization as well as the organization to the client. Public relations textbooks, especially those written by educators in the 1950s and later, have also called for the practice of the symmetrical model. [5]

This model implies that open discourse and fair competition among interdependent groups (for example, an organization and an activist group that is opposing it) result in practices and policies that most fairly reflect what is good for society. The dynamic interaction among competing groups suggests a political system nested somewhere between the cynicism of elitist theory and the optimism of pluralism. The role of the public relations practitioner within this political system involves problem-solving through communication programs designed to facilitate negotiation and compromise between an organization or client and other organized interests.

After further research involving Grunig and Hunt's public relations models, J. Grunig and L. Grunig realized that this typology works better as a normative (prescriptive) rather than a positive (descriptive) theory of how public relations is practiced. [8] More specifically, their latest research has shown that organizations use the models in two ways. First, the models function as situational strategies for different publics and public relations problems—not as single organizing frameworks. Second, the presuppositions of the models function as part of an organization's ideology. [1] This ideology is the tone that top management sets for the organization and is perpetuated by adherence to a particular worldview.

Evidence of top management's worldview can be found in any or all of the factors that reflect organizational culture, such as the nature and purpose of the public relations function within the organization. The relationship between the values of top management, or its ideology, and its definition of public relations for the organization is an important one. An understanding of this relationship can best be achieved by conceptualizing organizations as systems of politics.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

Organizational scholars have turned to organizational strategy, size, technology, and environment² in trying to un-

² Schneider [9] provided an in-depth exploration of the relationship between organizational environment and communication behavior. She hypothesized that an organization's environmental niche (based on Hage and Hull's typology of organizations—traditional/craft, mechanical, organic, mixed/mechanical-organic) would predict communication behavior. She discovered, however, only a weak relationship between an organization's environmental niche and its communication practices.

derstand determinants of organizational structure and functioning. However, Robbins reported that, at best, these four factors explain only 50 to 60 percent of the variability in structure. [10] He theorized that the missing link lies somewhere outside in the "twilight zone" of organizational politics, power, and coalition formation.

The power-control perspective, Robbins explained, states that at any given time, an organization's structure is the result of a power struggle by internal constituencies who are seeking to further their interests. For Bacharach and Lawler, "organizations are emergent activities; that is, they are the result of the conscious political decisions of particular actors and interest groups." [11] Pfeffer asserted that "organizations are political systems, coalitions of interest, and rationality is defined only with respect to unitary and consistent orderings of preferences." [12] Further, he argued that the power-control view of organizational behavior proposes that these coalitions wrestle in a power struggle to control the organization, and this power struggle arises because there is dissension concerning preferences or in definition of the situation.

If these researchers are correct in suggesting that the power-control perspective is crucial to understanding organizations, the distribution of power in organizations might be an important determinant of the structure and functioning of the public relations department. Exploring this possibility, L. Grunig presented a comparative analysis of 87 public relations practitioners in the Washington, DC, area based on in-depth personal interviews. [13] She determined that power comes to public relations practitioners as a result of the value which the dominant coalition, or the group of key decision-makers, attaches to the public relations function, the expertise of practitioners (leading to increased autonomy), and routinization and sophistication of technology in the public relations department. Evidence of power included involvement with the organization's dominant coalition, autonomy from the typical clearance process for news releases, support for and understanding of the public relations function by top management, and discretion for budgetary decisions. Practitioners in L. Grunig's study reported a limited degree of organizational power that varied with the structure of the organization.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig have continued to develop the assertion that organizational politics play an important role in determining the public relations behavior of organizations. [8] They included top management support and understanding as well as representation in the dominant coalition as independent variables in their systems model of public relations. Specifically, they argued that public relations does not exist in isolation in organizations. Unless those with power in the organization understand and support the public relations function, practitioners are not likely to practice sophisticated techniques of public relations.

Concurrent with research on the relationship between orga-

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nizational power and public relations, Pollack looked in depth at top management support of public relations in scientific organizations. [14] In addition to this variable, she examined involvement of the public relations director in major decisions, whether public relations decisions are made by the public relations director or top management, influence of the public relations department in organizational decision-making, authority level of the public relations department, percentage of recommendations made by the public relations department that were implemented by the organization in the last three years, and how important the dominant coalition believes public relations is to organizational success.

Pollack discovered that her variables provided further understanding of the relationship between power-related variables and the model of public relations practiced by an organization. Specifically, factor analysis of the variables produced two highly correlated factors. One described the extent to which public relations is represented in the dominant coalition; the second described the autonomy of the public relations department. The factors proved to be important determinants of the model of public relations practiced, especially the "representation in the dominant coalition" factor. [8]

Two interpretations of Pollack's findings were then provided by J. Grunig and L. Grunig. Either public relations departments represented in the dominant coalition are able to practice a two-way model of public relations, or public relations practitioners with the knowledge or experience to practice a two-way model are more likely to be represented in the dominant coalition. They reasoned that the second explanation is more accurate for several reasons. First, the percentage of practitioners in the public relations department with a bachelor's degree was correlated positively with the likelihood of representation in the dominant coalition (r = 0.15). Next, the more years in public relations that the director had, the greater the likelihood of representation in the dominant coalition (r = 0.25). Public relations directors with a science background were more likely to be a part of the dominant coalition (r = 0.25). J. Grunig and L. Grunig concluded that "more knowledgeable, experienced practitioners and more sophisticated departments are more likely to be represented in the dominant coalition." [8]

Grunig and Hunt argued that practitioners should be part of the organization's dominant coalition—participating in or influencing decisions, and thus practicing symmetrical or adaptive public relations. [5] For Grunig and Hunt, there is little justification for public relations in an organization unless practitioners are included in the dominant coalition.

Broom and Dozier stated that involvement of practitioners in organizational decision-making is "perhaps more important to the profession of public relations than any other measure of professional growth." [15] Involvement in management decision-making is fundamental to the very definition of public relations, they argued:

Isolation of public relations from decision-making limits the practice to a low-level support function. If practitioners are relegated the role of explaining and justifying others' decisions made independent of the public relations implication, then professional status is unlikely. [15]

In trying to understand why organizations practice public relations in a less effective manner than they could, or more specifically, why they relegate the public relations department to a mere "selling the organization" role, the presuppositions of J. Grunig and Hunt's communication models provide the explanation. Grunig and L. Grunig's research has shown that the dominant coalition of an organization identifies strategic publics in the environment as the target for public relations. Top management then turns the problem over to the public relations director and dictates to the director which communication model would be an appropriate strategy. Thus, the members of the dominant coalition decide how public relations will be practiced in their organization. [8] In making this decision, the worldview to which top management subscribes and its associated presuppositions become an important predictor of the model of public relations the dominant coalition chooses.

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATION MODELS

Grunig et al. explained that presuppositions about public relations begin with its role in society. [2] One worldview they identified is the pragmatic social role. Within this worldview, public relations is believed to have no social function other than to help clients. This role describes public relations as a useful practice, something that adds value to clients by assisting them in meeting organizational objectives through the implementation of communication programs. According to Grunig et al., practitioners who hold a pragmatic view of public relations usually see no need for codes of conduct or ethical standards; these standards may interfere with getting results for clients.

Some social scientists take another view of public relations, according to Grunig et al. These scholars see public relations, like society itself, as a neutral practice that is to be observed as an object of study. Grunig et al. labeled this position as one involving a neutral social role. Researchers taking this position merely seek to discover how practitioners view their social role and what their motivations are.

Still other practitioners and scholars see public relations as a set of behaviors influenced by worldview, Grunig et al. explained. They noted that two contrasting presuppositions view public relations as an instrument for maintaining or gaining power. The conservative social role implies that

public relations maintains a system of privilege by defending the interests of the economically powerful. Alternatively, the *radical social role* contends that public relations leads to social improvement, reform, and change.

Further developing the conservative and radical role of public relations, Grunig *et al.* pointed out that the presuppositions of these roles are asymmetrical. Inherent in these roles is the assumption that organizational communication can have powerful effects on society:

These roles see public relations as a tool used in a war among opposing social groups. They assume that organizations and opposing groups use communication to persuade or manipulate publics, governments, or organizations for the benefit of the organization sponsoring the communication program and not for the benefit of the other group or of both. In the language of game theory, public relations based on asymmetrical presuppositions is a zero-sum game: one organization, group, or public gains and the other loses. [2]

Further developing specific aspects of the asymmetrical mindset Grunig explained that

when an organization, its dominant coalition, or its public relations practitioners hold an asymmetrical worldview, they presuppose that the organization knows best. Furthermore, they assume that the public would benefit by cooperating with the organization. They assume that if dissident publics had "the big picture" or understood the organization, these publics would willingly "cooperate" with the organization. [1]

Thus, the task of public relations is to bring the positions of various publics in line with the organization's position so these publics will be cooperative.

Grunig contended that this "selling the organization" approach may sound reasonable until one considers some of the things organizations have tried to sell. Just to name a few, he listed pollution, toxic waste, drinking, smoking, guns, overthrow of governments, dangerous products, lowered salary and benefits, discrimination against women and minorities, job layoffs, dangerous manufacturing plants, risky transportation of products, higher prices, monopoly power, poor product quality, political favoritism, insider trading, use of poisonous chemicals, exposure to carcinogens, nuclear weapons, and even warfare. With this list in mind, Grunig asserted that organizations working with a selling perspective are operating on ethically questionable grounds. He pointed out, though, that organizations themselves often fail to recognize that their practices are detrimental to certain publics. Nevertheless, Grunig maintained that the long-term effects of asymmetrical communication programs frustrate an organization's socially responsible approach to public relations despite the good intentions an organization might have.

Grunig outlined other presuppositions as part of an asym-

metrical view:

- Internal orientation: Members of the organization look out from the organization and do not see the organization as outsiders see it.
- Closed system: Information flows out from the organization and not into it. [1]

Organizations that have no means for assessing the information needs of the public reflect the asymmetrical notion of a closed system. An effective program of communication research should be established that allows practitioners to function as boundary-spanners, directing and monitoring information to as well as from the organization.

Dozier provided an informative discussion of environmental scanning, a technique whereby practitioners establish inflowing communication by gathering "information about publics, about reactions of publics toward the organization, and about public opinion toward issues important to the organization". [16] Importantly, he found a strong positive relationship between practitioners' conducting of scanning and their participation in management decision-making.³

- Efficiency: Efficiency and control of costs are more important than innovation.
- Elitism: Leaders of the organization know best. They
 have more knowledge than members of publics. Wisdom is not the product of a "free marketplace of
 ideas."

In her research involving the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Childers [18] repeatedly ran into reflections of elitism among members of the organization. For example, she questioned the assistant to the director at the Office of Congressional Affairs about the role activism and public disapproval play in the Commission's decision-making efforts. He explained that in the end, public opposition does not matter. That is, the public has input at hearings, but all final decisions are up to the NRC, instillig the Commission with "a tremendous amount of power" and "a lot of authority."

- Conservatism: Change is undesirable. Outside efforts to change the organization should be resisted; pressure for change should be considered subversive.
- *Tradition*: Tradition provides an organization with stability and helps it to maintain its culture.

³ In his discussion of how individuals within organizations might garner power for themselves, Conrad revealed what might be an explanation for the positive relationship between practitioners' participation in scanning and inclusion in management decision-making. [17] He asserted that possessing valuable information is one of the most important sources of power in an organization. Thus, it follows that practitioners armed with knowledge that is important to the dominant coalition are more likely to be included in top management's decision-making.

 Central authority: Power should be concentrated in the hands of a few top managers. Employees should have little autonomy. Organizations should be managed as autocracies. [1]

Inherent in the asymmetrical notion of central authority is the belief that coordination and control are accomplished best through the exercise of authority, an assumption of the structuralist approach to organizations. [19] However, a stream of research by J. Grunig has shown that a high level of centralization often frustrates employee satisfaction within some organizations.

The alternative to the asymmetrical worldview is a worldview based on symmetrical presuppositions. Grunig et al. [2] made the case for symmetrical presuppositions as a framework for public relations theory because they argued that

public relations should be practiced to serve the public interest, to develop mutual understanding between organizations and their publics, and to contribute to informed debate about issues in society.

A worldview entailing symmetrical presuppositions is one that Grunig *et al.* called the idealistic view. They explained that this worldview sees public relations as a nonzero-sum game in which competing organizations or groups both can gain if they play the game right. Public relations is the tool that allows organizations and competing groups in a pluralistic system to manage their interdependence and resolve conflict for the benefit of all. [2]

Grunig drew upon several theorists' concepts identical or similar to symmetrical communication in his formulation of the two-way symmetrical model. [1] Carter's theory of communication and affective relations [20] into which were incorporated Newcomb's concept of coorientation⁴ [21] as well as Chaffee and McLeod's research on coorientation [22], provided a basis for Grunig's views. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson made a distinction between asymmetrical and symmetrical communication in their theory of interpersonal communication that Grunig has recognized and employed. [23] Further, he adopted Thayer's distinction between synchronic and diachronic communication elaborated in Thayer's systems theory of communication. [7] These symmetrical theories of communication led Grunig to develop the following presupposition:

Communication leads to understanding. The major purpose of communication is to facilitate understanding among people and other such systems as organizations, publics, or societies. Persuasion of one person or system by another is less desirable. [1]

From a systems theory approach to organizations, Grunig

⁴ According to J. Grunig, coorientation occurs when two or more people simultaneously orient to a situation or object rather than a single person orienting to a situation or object. [1]

developed four additional presuppositions that are important in establishing a public relations program based on symmetrical communication:

Holism: Systems consist of subsystems and are parts
of suprasystems. The whole is greater than the sum of
its parts, and each part of a system affects every other
part. [1]

Examples of the benefit of working with a presupposition of holism were provided by Wulff and Fiske. [24] In a collection of case studies in applied anthropology, Wulff and Fiske addressed how a sensitivity to holism made the difference bewteen effective and ineffective decision-making and policy implementation.

• Interdependence: Although organizations have boundaries that separate them from their environment, systems in the environment cross that boundary and "interpenetrate" [25] the system. [1]

Given the interdependency of environmental systems and organizations, a symmetrical framework for organizational communication would include recognizing the demands and/or needs of environmental systems and structuring the communication department to meet those demands and needs.⁵

- Open system: The organization is open to interpenetrating systems and freely exchanges information with these systems.
- Moving equilibrium: Systems strive toward an equilibrium with other systems, although they seldom actually achieve it. The desired equilibrium state constantly moves as the environment changes. Systems may attempt to establish equilibrium by controlling other systems, by adapting themselves to other systems, or by making mutual, cooperative adjustments. In the symmetrical approach to public relations, cooperative and mutual adjustment are preferred to control and adaptation. [1]

In addition to these systems presuppositions, J. Grunig included several presuppositions in the two-way symmetrical approach that are relevant to a discussion of an improved organizational communication

⁵ Bolman and Deal [19] explained that among organizational theorists, this matching of organizational structure with environmental demands is referred to as a "contingency" approach. They pointed out that Lawrence and Lorsch [26] and Galbraith [27] focused on the idea that turbulence and uncertainty among an organization's environmental systems necessitates an organizational structure that is complex, differentiated, and flexible if the organization is to effectively manage its interdependence with its environment. Tom Peters, author of the best-selling books, In Search of Excellence and Thriving on Chaos, has repeatedly emphasized the importance of flexibility on the part of organizations if they are going to remain responsive to environmental demands in the 1980s and

system:

- Autonomy: People are more innovative, constructive, and self-fulfilled when they have the autonomy to influence their own behavior, rather than having it controlled by others. Autonomy maximizes employee satisfaction inside the organization and cooperation outside the organization.
- Innovation: New ideas and flexible thinking should be stressed rather than tradition and efficiency.
- Decentralization of management: Management should be collective; managers should coordinate rather than dictate. Decentralization increases autonomy, employee satisfaction, and innovation.
- Responsibility: People and organizations must be concerned with the consequences of their behaviors on others and attempt to eliminate adverse consequences.
- Conflict resolution: Conflict should be resolved through negotiation, communication, and compromise and not through force, manipulation, coercion, or violence.
- Interest-group liberalism: Classic liberalism, which typically champions big government, can be as close-minded as classic conservatism, which typically champions big business. Interest-group liberalism, however, views the political system as a mechanism for open competition among interest or issue groups. Interest-group liberalism looks to citizen groups to "champion interests of ordinary people against unresponsive government and corporate structure. [28]" [1]

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASYMMETRICAL AND SYMMETRICAL MODELS

Grunig et al. [2] argued that, philosophically, symmetrical public relations is more ethical and socially responsible than asymmetrical public relations because it manages conflict rather than wages war. But they asserted that symmetrical communication programs are also pragmatically more successful than asymmetrical programs and contribute more to organizational effectiveness. They pointed out that the assumed powerful effects of asymmetrical communication seldom occur, and thus, asymmetrical public relations programs usually fail. Symmetrical presuppositions, however, suggest more realistic programs and effects. Thus, these programs often succeed and make the organizations that sponsor them more effective. That is,

Practitioners of symmetrical public relations choose shortterm cognitive effects rather than long-term behavioral effects. The choice of cognitive effects (changes in the way people think about and understand issues) makes it more feasible for practitioners to measure and evaluate the effects of communication programs in the short term when evaluation makes it possible for them to make midcourse changes in the programs. Yet ... achieving short-term cognitive effects through symmetrical communication programs maximizes the chances for long-term behavioral changes. Publics who are treated as equals of an organization and whose ideas are communicated to the organization—as well as the ideas of the organization being communicated to the publics—more often support or fail to oppose an organization than do publics whose behavior the organization tries to change directly in the short term. [2]

L. Grunig argued for the potential effectiveness of a twoway symmetrical approach after examining how organizations deal with activist groups. [29] She found that none of the organizations she looked at had tried two-way symmetrical communication. The asymmetrical models that the organizations employed failed to resolve conflict and often resulted in litigation or continued conflict.

Turk [30] found that, of the state agencies she studied in Louisiana, only one used the two-way symmetrical model. The programs of the other agencies, based on asymmetrical models, were ineffective. She concluded that state agencies that rely upon public information officers [PIOs] to 'get the word out' to win support for agency policies and programs may be overrating the ability of PIOs to influence the agency picture portrayed by the news media for consumption by those who get their information about state government from media.

CONCLUSION

The important implication of L. Grunig's and Turk's work is that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations may provide what is not only an ethical and socially responsible approach to public relations, but also an effective one. And importantly, its quest for accommodation between organizations and the public, as opposed to domination of one by the other, suggests that all parties, in a sense, can win. Even if the two-way symmetrical approach fails with some publics, such as single-issue groups that resist any invitation for communication, it still deserves exploration for all communication programs.

The two-way symmetrical model suggests a research tradition in public relations that is stimulating at the very least. The prospect of having a public relations framework with unique implications for the field suggests opportunity that cannot be ignored. In his delineation of this framework, Grunig has pointed out a challenging direction for organizational communication with positive implications for the social responsibility and effectiveness of the public relations function.

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Using the right visual aid during a speech or presentation can help get the effect you desire. If you want someone to feel the way you feel, use pictures, slides, etc. If you want someone to think the way you think, use graphs, charts, statistics, etc.