

Linking Ethics Congruence, Communication Strategies, and Relationship Building

Hongmei Shen, Ph.D. and Jeong-Nam Kim, Ph.D.

Public relations research has shown a positive correlation between two-way symmetrical communication strategies and the quality of organization-public relationships (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). However, little research has examined what happens between communication strategies and organization-public relationships, i.e., their mediating variables.

At the same time, ethics has become an integral part of the organizational context due to growing pressure from the media, activist groups and nongovernmental organizations (Kapstein, 2001). Organizational psychology researchers have studied the ways in which ethics congruence or fit between employees and their organizations can influence employee affects and behaviors, such as their work attitudes and turnover intentions (e.g., Sims & Kroeck, 1994) and organizational commitment (e.g., Valentine & Barnett, 2003). Along similar lines, a few studies in the marketing literature (e.g., Bridges, Keller, & Sood, 2000; Harris, Keynes, & de Chernatony, 2001) have revealed that effective communication strategies can improve the congruence between brand team members' (employees) perceptions of the nature of their brands. These studies

indicated ethics congruence can influence organization-public relationships (e.g., commitment), while communication strategies can affect the congruence of perceptions of brands.

These strands of research suggest the possibility of enhancing the relationship management literature by introducing the concept of ethics congruence between employees and their organizations, referred to as person-organization fit on ethics. This current study examined the hierarchical relations between employee-organization ethics congruence, organizations' internal communication strategies, and relationships with their employees. Specifically, this study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test whether person-organization fit on ethics acts as a mediator between communication strategies and organization-public relationships or another consequence of communication strategies mediated by organization-public relationships.

Conceptual Variables and Hypotheses

Understanding Organization-Public Relationships

Relationship management has become the focus of research in public relations in recent years (e.g., Broom et al. 1997; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, 2000; Ferguson, 1984; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Bruning and Ledingham (1999) defined organization-public relationships from the perspective of relationship impacts. They referred to organization-public relationships as the “state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 160).

Related to the concept of organization-public relationships is the issue of its subjectivity versus objectivity. Some scholars (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Duck, 1986; Huang, 1997, 2001) conceived of relationships as subjective realities, but others (e.g., Katz & Kahn, 1967; Oliver, 1990) viewed them as objective. Still others (e.g., Andersen, 1993; Cappella, 1991) saw relationships as a combination of subjective perceptions and objective qualities of relationships independent of participants. Nevertheless, most research has conceptualized organization-public relationships as “the public’s perceptions of its personal and professional relationship with the organization” (Ki & Hon, 2007, p. 3).

Huang (1997) pointed out that relationships should be a multidimensional notion. In a similar vein, L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Ehling (1992) proposed six dimensions of relationship state: reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) presented five dimensions: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. Four dimensions have been widely supported: trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992; L. A. Grunig et al., 1992; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997, 2001).

The relational dimension *trust* refers to “one [relational] party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 5). *Trust* has three subdimensions: integrity, dependability, and competence. Integrity shows one party’s belief of consistency and fairness in the other’s behaviors. Dependability describes the consistency between one’s words and behaviors. Competence indicates the extent to which one party believes the other has the ability to do what it says it will do.

The relational dimension *commitment* reflects “the extent to which the public [or the organization] feels that the relationship is worth spending time and energy to maintain” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 3). *Commitment* has two subdimensions—continuance and affective commitment. Continuance commitment relates to behavior, whereas affective commitment concerns emotions.

The relational dimension satisfaction is defined as “the extent to which one [relational] party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 20). From the social exchange theory’s perspective, both relational parties (e.g., a public and its organization) are satisfied with their relationship when they achieve a balance of rewards and costs (Stafford & Canary, 1991). In this study, satisfaction measures the favorable feelings expressed by relational parties.

Control mutuality refers to “the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 19). Power imbalance is an important issue in control mutuality. However, power does not have to be equally distributed to maintain a stable relationship.

Understanding Communication Strategies

A key concept that is related to organization-public relationships is effective communication strategies. Many researchers have concluded a positive link between these two theoretical concepts (e.g., Broom et al., 1997; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). This section explicates literature on effective communication strategies.

A proposed four-dimensional framework attempts to capture the elements of effective communication strategies (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). The four dimensions are symmetry versus asymmetry, one-way versus two-way, mediated and interpersonal techniques, and ethics. The first dimension examines the extent to which the public relations strategies are characterized by collaboration (cooperation with publics) and advocacy (manipulation and persuasion of publics). Related to the second dimension, one-way means merely dissemination of information, whereas two-way entails an exchange of information through formative and evaluative research. The third dimension captures communication channels used by public relations professionals. Mediated communication is usually indirect, using mass media or mediated materials (Huang, 2001), but interpersonal communication is often direct and face-to-face. The last dimension is the extent to which public relations strategies are ethical.

Four communication models exist in accordance with their varying magnitude on these four dimensions: public information, press agency, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical model. Another model was added later based on these four dimensions—the mixed-motive model (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; L. A. Grunig et al., 2002). Arguably in internal settings, effective public relations should be “two-way,” “symmetrical,” and ethical, relying on either “mediated or interpersonal communication”; the two-way symmetrical model appears more applicable (L. A. Grunig et al., p. 378). In contrast, the two-way asymmetrical model hence appears less effective.

Linking Communication Strategies to Organization-Public Relationships

It has been widely supported in public relations that communication strategies can build and maintain “mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and

its publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 2). For instance, Huang’s (1999, 2001) studies demonstrated that the use of two-way symmetrical communication strategies can generate trust and control mutuality. L. A. Grunig et al. (2002) suggested that the outcome of employee communication is employees’ satisfaction with their jobs and with the organization as a whole—one indicator of organization-public relationships. Broom et al. (1997) also emphasized the role of communication in building relationships, stating, “It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the communication linkage in organization-public relationships” (p. 94). Along similar lines, Toth (2000) suggested, “The end goal of interpersonal communication is to establish and maintain successful relationships” (p. 217). As noted previously, two-way symmetrical communication is often more effective than two-way asymmetrical communication in internal settings. It is thus reasonable to anticipate that two-way symmetrical communication produces quality relationships between an organization and its employees. The researchers hence hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): The two-way symmetrical communication model is positively associated with organization-public relationships.

Understanding Person-Organization Fit on Ethics

Another important concept relevant to organization-public relationships is person-organization fit. Fit has been shown critical to understanding employees’ affects and behaviors during the process of their interactions with their organizations. In general, person-organization fit refers to the “compatibility between people and entire organizations” (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005, p. 285). This compatibility occurs when individuals’ personality matches the organizational climate (Christiansen,

Villanova, & Mikulay, 1997; Ryan & Schmitt, 1996; Tom, 1971), when their values agree with the organizational culture (e.g., Chatman, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), or when their goals are in common with those of organizations (e.g., Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991).

Studies on person-organization fit have focused most often on value congruence and its relevance to outcome variables, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (e.g., Cable & Edwards, 2004; Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, in press; Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005; van Vianen, 2000). Akin to value congruence, this study examined person-organization fit on ethical values. Ethics refers to the “rules or principles that can be used to solve problems in which morals and values are in question,” where “morals” means “traditions of belief that have evolved over several years or even centuries in societies concerning right and wrong conduct” and “values” are “beliefs about what objects or ideas are important” (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1996, p. 7).

Linking Person-Organization Fit on Ethics to Organization-Public Relationships

Public relations scholars have not studied the relationship between person-organization fit and organization-public relationships. A pioneering scholar on organization-public relationships management provided only the fleeting remark that “perceptions, motives, needs... [that] are the sources of change pressure or tension...derived from the environment” comprise antecedents of the organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2003, p. 94). It seems that person-organization fit (perceptions) can be regarded as one source of tension that drives relationships between an organization and its employee public.

In actuality, two dimensions of organization-public relationships, commitment and satisfaction, have been largely supported in the organizational psychology literature as outcomes of person-organization fit. Researchers (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1994; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly et al., 1991) have found that greater amount of person-organization fit can lead to employees' higher levels of satisfaction with the organization.

Two studies in internal marketing (Harris et al., 2001; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) explored the fit-relationships link. An example is the identity-reputation gap model of brand management by Harris et al. (2001). The model suggested that brand vision and culture, which encompasses the congruence between brand core values and employees' values and assumptions, is positively related to relationships, including relationships between employees, employees with customers, and stakeholders.

The second study by Morgan and Hunt (1994) investigated the relationship between trust and commitment—two dimensions of organization-public relationships, and person-organization fit. Morgan and Hunt's trust-commitment theory in relationship marketing posits that shared values are positively related to commitment and trust. In other words, when exchange partners (e.g., buyer organization and suppliers) share values, they will be more committed to one another and trust one another more. According to Morgan and Hunt, shared values or "the extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and policies are important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong," are the "best measure of person-organization fit in employment settings" (p. 25). Although these researchers only tested the relationship between person-organization fit and commitment and trust in

interorganizational relations, they suggested that this finding could be applied to internal settings where exchange relationships exist between an organization and its employees.

Based on the above literature, this study expected the following:

Hypothesis 2(H₂): Person-organization fit on ethical values is positively related to organization-public relationships in internal settings.

Connecting Communication Strategies with Person-Organization Fit

There is clearly a paucity of research relating communication strategies to person-organization fit in the public relations literature. Meanwhile, in public relations' allied disciplines advertising and marketing, a few researchers have begun introducing the concept of fit into their literature (e.g., Bridges et al., 2000; Harris et al., 2001). Advertising researchers Bridges et al. (2000) suggested that effective communication strategies can improve the congruence among employees' perceptions of the nature of their companies' brands. Likewise, marketing scholars Harris et al. (2001) proposed that two-way and more frequent communication between management and employees can enhance the congruence of perceptions of the company's brand. These studies appear to indicate effective communication strategies as positive influencers of person-organization fit, such as person-organization fit on ethics.

Based on the aforementioned literature, this study predicted that employees' fit on ethical values with the organization can be increased by effective communication strategies. More specifically, the two-way symmetrical model is positively associated with person-organization fit on ethics. In an organization using the two-way symmetrical communication model, employees are able to have a better understanding of their organization's and coworkers' ethical values because of this model's characteristics

(e.g., collaboration, two-way exchange of information, using multiple communication channels both interpersonal and mediated). Hence the following hypothesis was drawn:

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): The two-way symmetrical communication model is positively related to person-organization fit on ethics.

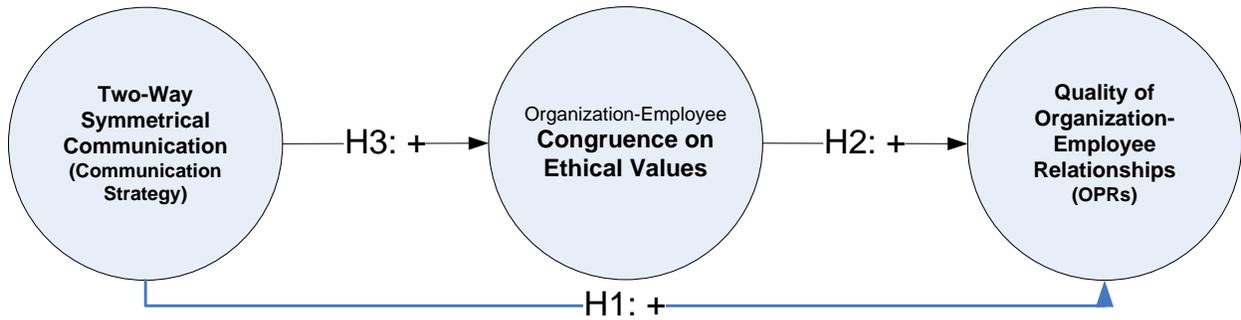


Figure 1. The conceptual model with partial mediation.

Based on the mixed results from the extant literature, it is also possible that communication strategies exert influence on organization-public relationships completely through person-organization fit. The nested model technique (Alwin & Mueller, 1971) is appropriate for examining both the partial (see Figure 1) and complete mediation model (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The conceptual model with complete mediation.

Herndon, Fraedrich, and Yeh (2001) and Valentine, Godkin, and Lucero (2002) reported a positive predictive effect of organizational commitment (one dimension of

organization-public relationships) on person-organization fit. Further research (see Ki & Hon, 2007) also showed that organization-public relationships can predict a public's attitude, or "internal evaluation of an object" (p. 6), which is similar to person-organization fit on ethical values (perceptions of congruence of ethical values). Equally plausible is the idea that those employees experiencing good relationships with their organization are more likely to internalize the organizational norms and ethical standards. Testing an "equivalent" nested model (e.g., with the same set of variables but different causal directions) seemed necessary. In this model communication strategies' effect on person-organization fit on ethical values is partially (see Figure 3) and completely mediated (see Figure 4) by organization-public relationships. Testing and reporting plausible alternative models are desirable when there are multiple rival models whose theoretical implications are different but statistical properties (e.g., identical measures and model fit) are equivalent (Hershberger, 2006; Williams, Bozdogan, & Aiman-Smith, 1996).

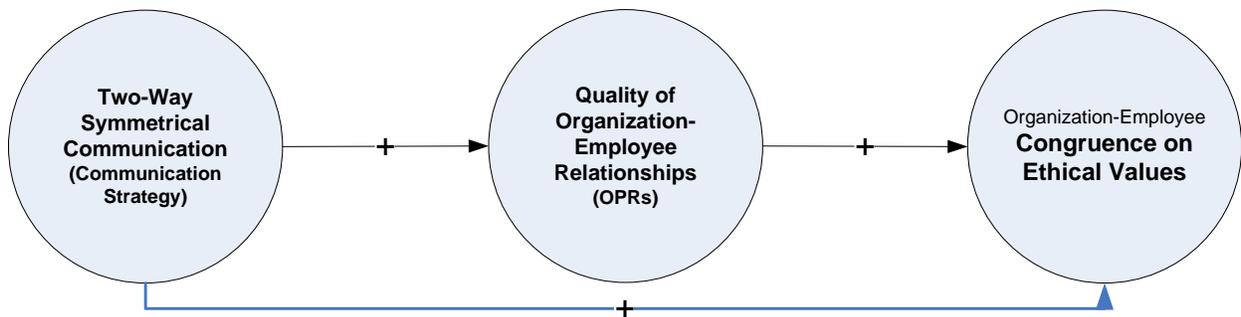


Figure 3. Alternative conceptual model with partial mediation.



Figure 4. Alternative conceptual model with complete mediation.

Method

Participants

This research used nonprobability sampling. Researchers contacted 120 randomly selected organizations listed in the 2006 O'Dwyer's *Directory of Corporate Communications*; two companies responded and participated in the study. The researchers' acquaintances' organizations were also contacted for participant recruitment. In the end, 120 employees from 22 organizations filled out the online survey. Participating organizations included management consulting firms, public accounting firms, financial firms, government agencies, electronic companies, and nongovernmental organizations. Details of the demographic information of the participants are discussed in the Results section.

Procedure

An online survey was conducted. All participants were sent a link via email to invite them to complete the questionnaire. Standard human subjects review procedures were followed. No IP addresses of participants' computers were collected by the researchers. Therefore, it was impossible to connect the survey to individual participants. Participants' anonymity was protected.

Measures

Person-organization fit. Cable and DeRue's (2002) three-item scale has been commonly used to measure the compatibility between an organization and its members about goals, culture, or values. It asks for participants' perceptions of their degree of fit with an organizational characteristic of interest. This study used a modified seven-point three-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue about the perceived compatibility of ethical values. Items included "My company/organization's ethical values provide a good fit with my own ethical values (item 1);" "My own ethical values are very similar to the things that my company/organization values in terms of ethics (item 2);" and "My personal ethical values match my company/organization's ethical values (item 3)."

Communication strategies. Three items from the measures of two-way symmetrical communication on a scale ranging from one to seven by L. A. Grunig et al. (2002) were adapted for this study to assess organizations' communication strategies. Items included "I am usually informed about major changes in policy that affect my job before they take place (item 1);" "This organization encourages differences of opinion (item 2);" and "Most communication between administrators and other employees in this company can be said to be two-way (back and forth) communication (item 3)."

*Organization-public relationships.*¹ This study revised 17 seven-point Likert-type items from Huang's (2001) organization-public relationships scale that have been shown to have high reliability. Items included "The company/organization treats me fairly and justly, compared to other organizations/companies (trust);" "Generally speaking, the organization/company and I are both satisfied with the decision-making process (control mutuality);" "In general, I am satisfied with the relationship with the

organization/company (satisfaction);” and “I believe that it is worthwhile to try to maintain the relationship with the organization/company (commitment).”

Analysis

The two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was used to analyze the data. The nature of the proposed models makes this multivariate analysis technique an ideal choice. First, SEM is capable of examining the plausibility of hypothesized causal models through analyzing both non-experimental (e.g., this current study) and experimental data (Bollen, 1989). Second, it can simultaneously provide “estimates of the strength of all the hypothesized relationships between variables in a theoretical model” (Maruyama, 1998, p. 4). Third, this method can also tap into the reliability of measurement models of the latent theoretical variables (Bollen, 1989; Hancock & Mueller, 2001).

Results

Demographic Information of Participants

Fifty-four participants were female, 46 male, and 20 did not identify their sex. There were 46 Caucasians, 5 African Americans, 1 Latin Americans, 40 Asians, 8 others, and 20 participants who did not identify their ethnicity. Except for 30 participants who did not indicate years of experience, 21 participants reported that they had worked with their current employer for less than one year, 34 from one to three years, and 35 from three to ten years. Also, 31 participants indicated that they were in an entry-level position, 49 in a senior position, 17 in a manager or above position, and 23 participants declined to report their position.

In the present study the researchers consider all participants as an employee public regardless of their rank. Each participant, whether of high or low status, experiences an “organization’s persona” (Heath, 1992, p. 39) as an individual member. They are influencing and influenced by the overall organizational culture, climate, and ethical values as an individual constituent. However, it is possible that senior position employees would be different from the other lower level or mid-level employees in terms of person-organization fit of ethical values, which is a key interest. Thus the researchers tested this possibility by conducting an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test of person-organization fit across three positions, low-level, mid-level, and senior level employees. The one-way ANOVA test found no significant difference in person-organization fit responses in terms of their organizational ranks ($p = .25$): the means were 5.29, 5.11, and 5.71 correspondingly.

Two-Step Process of Latent Path Modeling

Before the two-step SEM analysis, the researchers conducted reliability analysis of all the measures. All the measures were reliable, with a Cronbach α value for person-organization fit as .97, for communication strategies as .70, and organization-public relationships as .97.

Next the two-step SEM was performed using the EQS 6.1 program (Bentler, 2005). For the first step, the measurement model was evaluated to check its fit with data. We imposed a model where all factors were allowed to covary. The data-model fit criteria by Hu and Bentler were used: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $\geq .95$ and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) $\leq .10$ or Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $\leq .06$ and SRMR $\leq .10$. Also, according to Kline (1998), the

value of χ^2/df should be less than 3. The measurement model fit indices met the above data-model fit criteria: CFI=.95, SRMR =.05, RMSEA =.08, χ^2/df = 1.50. The remaining measurement model results were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1²

Measurement Model Parameter Estimates (N = 120)

<i>Latent Variable</i>	<i>Measurement Item</i>	<i>Parameter Estimate</i>	<i>R²</i>
Two-way symmetrical communication (communication strategy)	Item 1	.69	.47
	Item 2	.93	.86
	Item 3	.63	.40
Organization – employee congruence on ethics (Person-organization fit)	Item 1	.95	.91
	Item 2	.97	.94
	Item 3	.93	.86
Organization-employee relationship (Organization-public relationships)	Trust	.93	.86
	Control mutuality	.93	.87
	Commitment	.79	.63
	Satisfaction	.90	.82

The second step was a nested model comparison of the models (i.e., partial vs. complete mediation). Overall goodness-of-fit indices and chi-square values were obtained and compared. The standardized path coefficients were provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The first nested model showed that for partial mediation model (see Figure 1) it had a χ^2/df value of 1.18 (<3), model AIC (-24.72), CFI (.97), SRMR (.04), RMSEA (.04); for complete mediation (see Figure 2) it had a χ^2/df value of 3.28 (>3), model AIC (39.60), CFI (.94), SRMR (.15), RMSEA (.14). These analyses suggested

that the complete mediation condition did not meet the criteria, but the partial mediation condition did. Thus the partial mediation model (see Figure 1) could be retained as a valid structure for the data.



Figure 1. The conceptual model with partial mediation (with paths).



Figure 2. The conceptual model with complete mediation (with paths).

We also proposed an alternative model specifying the person-organization fit as an outcome of organization-public relationships (see Figures 3 and Figure 4). This alternative model is a viable specification in that better (or worse) relationships between an organization and its employees would increase (or decrease) the employees' internalization of organizational ethical standards. In addition, the alternative model could be specified as a complete versus partial mediation model between communication strategy and person-organization fit via organization-public relationships. The standardized path coefficients were provided in Figure 3 and Figure 4. The data-model fit indices results indicated that for partial mediation (see Figure 3) it had a χ^2/df

value of 1.18 (<3), model AIC (-24.72), CFI (.97), SRMR (.04), and RMSEA (.04); for complete mediation model (see Figure 4) it had a χ^2/df value of 1.27 (<3), model AIC (-22.69), CFI (.99), SRMR (.04), and RMSEA (.05). Given that the complete mediation model was nested within the partial mediation model, a chi-square statistics difference test was conducted. The chi-square difference was not statistically different ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.04$, $p > .05$). In this case, we compared model AIC and found that the partial mediation condition was more parsimonious. Based on the above results, we concluded that the partial mediation condition (see Figure 3) was a more viable model structure for the data.



Figure 3. The alternative model with partial mediation (with paths).



Figure 4. The alternative model with complete mediation (with paths).

When both the hypothesized model and equivalent model fit, most researchers retain the originally hypothesized one (Hershberger, 2006, p. 36); however, it seemed more important in this study to explore the implications of both models. The hypothesized partial mediation model had one insignificant path (z statistic = 1.39) from

person-organization fit to organization-public relationships (see Figure 1), and the alternative partial mediation model had one insignificant path (z statistic = 1.47) from organization-public relationships to person-organization fit (see Figure 3). Both path z statistics were very close to a significant p value (e.g., $z = 1.96$ at .05 level). One possible reason for the insignificance was the small sample size. The desirable power to reject the null hypothesis containing unacceptable data-model fit was .80 (Hancock, 2006). Thus we conducted a post hoc power analysis for testing overall data-model fit for these two models, and found their estimated power was approximately .09. We did not have enough power to reject the null hypothesis with unacceptable data-model fit. Future research is necessary to examine such a possibility.³

Hypothesis Testing

Three hypotheses were tested, each of which corresponded with a path in the two retained models (see Figures 1 and 3). All the individual paths of the two models were examined, including magnitude and significance of the coefficients.

Hypothesis 1: Two-way symmetrical communication and Organization-public relationships. This hypothesis was supported. Results showed that two-way symmetrical communication significantly and positively predicted organization-public relationships (the first partial mediation model: path = .79, $p < .05$; the second partial mediation model: path = .87, $p < .05$). This suggests that two-way symmetrical communication will lead to better relationships between organizations and their employees.

Hypothesis 2: Person-Organization fit on ethics and organization-public relationships. This hypothesis was not supported. Person-organization fit did not have a

significant bearing on organization-public relationships (the first partial mediation model: path = .12, *n. s.*), nor did organization-public relationships have a significant impact on person-organization fit (the second partial mediation model: path = .29, *n. s.*).

Hypothesis 3: Two-way symmetrical communication and Person-Organization fit on ethics. This hypothesis was supported. Results indicated that two-way symmetrical communication positively and significantly influenced person-organization fit on ethics (the first partial mediation model: path = .65, $p < .05$; the second partial mediation model: path = .40, $p < .05$).

Discussion

Public relations researchers called for more research on the antecedents of organization-public relationships (e.g., Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). This study attempted to provide more insights into the potential impact of person-organization fit on ethics as an antecedent on organization-public relationships. It further examined the hierarchical relations between person-organization fit on ethics, organizations' internal communication strategies, and organization-public relationships. Moreover, the study examined an alternative conceptual model that specified person-organization fit as an outcome of organization-public relationships. Mixed results resulted from the SEM analysis.

This study extended the current theoretical framework on organization-public relationships to relationships between employees and their organizations. The finding that the two-way symmetrical communication model significantly and positively affected organization-public relationships suggests that the communication-organization-public relationships link also applies to internal settings. Effective two-way symmetrical

communication strategies can help build quality relationships not only between an organization and its external publics (see Huang, 1999, 2001), but also between the organization and its own employees. Taking into account McCown's (2006) research on employees becoming internal activists when they felt their concerns were not given attention by the management, our study further confirmed the importance of having two-way symmetrical communication to establish better relationships with employees. Without these two-way symmetrical communication strategies, employees may perceive their relationships with their organization as poor and become "angry" internal activists, leading to organizational crises. On the other hand, as L. Grunig et al. (2002) pointed out, employees working in organizations that adopt two-way symmetrical communication strategies are more likely to be "effective symmetrical communicators with members of external publics as well as internal" (p. 534). In other words, two-way symmetrical communication strategies in internal settings can help enhance an organization's relationships with internal as well as external publics.

Second, both models demonstrated a significant positive predictive effect of two-way symmetrical communication strategies on person-organization fit on ethical values. This finding has tremendous implications for scandal-plagued corporate America, as employees are growing increasingly cynical about the ethical values of organizations. As Hunt, Wood, and Chonko (1989) asserted, managers must communicate the ethical principles embedded in organizational policies and practices. Employees may adopt unethical values and engage in unethical or questionable behaviors when organizational ethics are not communicated to them (Singhapakdi, Vitell, & Franke, 1999). Moreover, organizations must take special care when communicating ethical standards and codes

of ethics because an organization's codes of ethics may appear "authoritarian" or "paternalistic" to employees (Cressey & Moore, 1983, p. 63). When organizations utilize a collaborative stance, two-way exchange of information, and multiple communication channels (interpersonal and mediated), employees are able to better understand their organization's and coworkers' ethical values.

At the same time, organizations themselves must act ethically; communication itself is not enough. Actions speak louder than words. When inconsistency exists between communication and an organization's ethical behavior, the organization's codes and programs of ethics "are seen as merely a facade, window dressing...designed to gloss over the organization's real values and conduct. Ethics programs and lofty codes become elaborate deceptions" (Seeger, 1997, p. 194). Particularly, suppose the organization acts unethically albeit its endorsement of ethical values in statements of visions, missions, goals and objectives, employees may feel compelled to adopt the organization's unethical position or experience dissonance accompanied by an internal conflict. Either is troubling. When employees are opted to become part of the unethical community, serious consequences undoubtedly ensue. Many front-page bankruptcies alarmingly demonstrate this point. Some dissonant employees may either leave or become whistle-blowers.

Although we did not find significance for the path from person-organization fit to organization-public relationships and the path from organization-public relationships to person-organization fit in the two retained partial mediation models, the other two complete mediation models with worse data-model fit reported significant paths from person-organization fit to organization-public relationships and from organization-public

relationships to person-organization fit, respectively. In addition, the correlations between person-organization fit and organization-public relationships in the two partial mediation models were high and significant. One possible explanation for this may be that ethical congruence is only a small part of the cause of or outcome from the perceived relationship quality among employees. There are other factors that may contribute to the perceived relationship quality other than the ethical congruence employees have with their organizations. For example, organizational climate was found to be positively associated with satisfaction (e.g., L. R. James & Tetrick, 1986; Johnson & McIntye, 1998; Kras & Whatley, 1990), commitment (e.g., Payne & Huffman, 2005), trust (e.g., Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002), and perceived power (e.g., Carless, 2004). It will be an interesting direction of future research to further investigate the relationships among organizational climate, organization-employee ethical congruence and perceived relationship quality.

Albeit our study could not determine the direction of causality between person-organization fit and organization-public relationships through testing an equivalent nested model,⁴ it is theoretically intriguing to investigate this further in future studies. As Herndon et al. (2001) argued, committed employees (one dimension of organization-public relationships) tend to “reinforce the existing value structure around them” (p. 74). It is likely that employees who have more power in influencing their organizations (control mutuality), are more likely to open up to their organizations (trust), and feel more favorably toward their organizations (satisfaction) will identify more with their organization’s and coworkers’ ethical values. Conversely, employees who see a high congruence between their own ethical values with those of their coworkers and

organization may perceive their relationships with the organization to be of high quality. Future research should closely examine the relationship between person-organization fit and organization-public relationships.

Our study has a few limitations. First, we used a convenient sample after failing to solicit sufficient response in the random sampling process, which could have affected our results. Our intention was not to generalize the findings beyond the scope of the sample. However, a random sample could increase the interpretability and confidence of our findings. Second, about 50 percent of our participants reported that they held a managerial or above position. We did not separate them from non-managerial participants because our questionnaire items aimed at understanding the organization's communication practices from the perspectives of both non-managers and managers who are part of the communication process, and because there was no significant difference in person-organization fit responses among these employees in relation to their organizational ranks. However, it will be interesting for future studies to compare the perspectives of managers with those of non-managerial employees to see if there is any discrepancy in understanding the organization's communication practices. For instance, pursuing this research topic, White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) examined personal influence of the CEO and top managers as a positive influencer on non-managerial employees' information satisfaction and behavioral intention of advocacy for the organization. More studies along these lines will enhance our understanding of internal communication processes.

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Footnotes

¹ For organization-public relationships, we used composite scores of multiple items for each dimension of organization-public relationships scale (e.g., trust or control mutuality).

² The measurement information is for the partial mediation models. Both partial mediation models (Communication Strategy → Person-Organization Fit → Organization-public relationships vs. Communication Strategy → Organization-public relationships → Person-Organization Fit) have identical parameter estimates and R^2 .

³ For instance, if a researcher intends to have a level of power of .80 (using an $\alpha = .05$ -level test) given the true RMSEA value of .00 in the population, with a $df = 30$ (as in our two retained models), the sample size should be 343 (see power analysis and sample size table in Hancock, 2006).

⁴ It was impossible to integrate both paths (from person-organization fit to organization-public relationships or vice versa) in one model because of the identification issue.