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The Status of Public Relations in Russia

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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by

Inga Lvovna Ragozina

December 2007

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Dr. Stephen Marshall, Chair

Dr. James Mooney

Dr. Michael McKinney

Keywords: Russia, Public Relations, Models of Public Relations

## ABSTRACT

### The Status of Public Relations in Russia

by

Inga Lvovna Ragozina

This study explores the status of public relations in the fledgling democratic Russian Federation. The purpose was to determine: whether public relations practitioners in Russia practice Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models of public relations; how public relations has contributed to the political and economic transformation in Russia; and how the former communist propaganda has affected contemporary public relations.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 10 Russian public relations practitioners. The findings revealed that the 4 models of public relations are practiced in Russia; communist propaganda affected contemporary public relations; and, the field of public relations contributed to the political and economic transformation. This study adds a Russian perspective to the global theory of public relations and provides practical implications for public relations practitioners that could be the basis for further study concerning typical aspects of public relations in Russia.

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DEDICATION  
To my husband

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognized that 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture was the birthplace of public relations. Nations that yesterday did not enjoy freedom of speech and democratic institutions “today are widely adopting public relations as a social institution and developing their own theory base” (Golitsinski, 2000, p.2). China, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, and other countries now have their own public relations organizations. According to Molleda and Moreno (2006), the dynamic global environment represents an opportunity for development of public relations in emerging and transitional democracies and economics.

Russia has experienced dramatic political, economical, and cultural changes during the last 17 years. The country has undergone transformation from totalitarianism to democracy and from a centrally directed economy to a free market economy. These changes have created social implications that have modified the social structure and communication among social groups (Peterson, 2004). There was limited marketing communication in Russia during the Soviet era: the market was in deficit, companies did not have to compete for the customer, all mass media was state-owned, and any product or brand information was always considered to be absolutely truthful (Barannikov, 2004). Tsetsura (2004) observes that Russians were not familiar with the concept of public relations 20 years ago and that public relations in the Soviet Russia was considered to be “a marketing function that was used in capitalist countries”(p.332).

According to Epley (1992), “the economical, political and social transition in Russia is the largest of its kind ever”, and it “affects not only the Soviet people, but the entire world” and it is “essential that the understanding which public relations generates be an integral part of that change” (p.29). He proposes that “no command economy so large has ever been converted to a

market economy. There are no models” (p. 29). Epley also observes that the Russians believe the public relations practiced in the West is a necessary part of the new Russian business world. According to Pasti (2005), Russia has opened up to the West “a unique historical laboratory, in spite of increasing criticism apropos recent developments in terms of democracy, civil society and media” (p.90).

The purpose of this study is explore the status of public relations in Russia and to learn if Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of public relations – press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical – are used by Russian public relations practitioners. In addition to these two goals, this study also explores how the field of public relations developed in Russia, if and how it has been affected by the former communist propaganda, and to what degree the field of public relations has contributed to the political and economic transformation in Russia. Finally, the purpose of this study is to add a Russian perspective to the global theory of public relations.

The method of this study is qualitative interviewing. It is based on Petersone’s (2004) method of research: she arranged the interview protocol regarding the main concepts of the study - the four models of public relations, effects of communist propaganda on public relations, and transformation public relations. Therefore, qualitative interviewing as the research method for this study is chosen. Long interviews were conducted with Russian public relations practitioners.

The significance of this research is embedded in the need to understand the status of public relations in Russia, where few studies about public relations have been conducted. This study explores the emergence of the profession of public relations in the recently democratic Russian Federation and identifies whether public relations practitioners in Russia practice Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) models of public relations. This study researches three concepts of public relations

that include: models of public relations, effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations in Russia, and transformation public relations.

This study does not attempt to analyze the overall practice of public relations in Russia because the small sample of participants will not permit generalizations about the field. The findings of the study represent the experiences and observations of the 10 participants (Peterson, 2004).

Peterson (2004) observed that although other post-soviet countries have experienced similar political and economical developments, the findings of this study may or may not be relevant to those countries. The researcher further noted that the process of transformation is still in continuation. This study describes experiences of participants up through the year 2007. Subsequent developments of transformation may challenge the current observations and add new aspects to the practice of public relations in Russia.

This study represents a contribution to the global body of knowledge about public relations. The Russian perspective augments this knowledge concerning a country where prior research has been scant. The goal of this study is to detect patterns that could guide future research involving Russian public relations. Additionally, principles discovered from this study could be meaningful to business entities desiring to mount effective PR campaigns. Peterson (2004) correctly emphasizes that these principles should serve to illumine the diverse aspects of the field and the manner in which political and economical factors influence the practice of public relations in Russia.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the three main concepts of this research. First, the propagandistic approach to public relations is examined to determine if it has impacted the practice of public relations in Russia. Second, the conclusion consists of discussions of transformation public relations. Third, the four models of public relations and the dimensions that characterize them are described in order to explain the different approaches to the practice of public relations. The literature review provides a brief historical and political context of Russia and then presents an overview of public relations in Russia.

#### Brief History of the Russian Political Context

The history of Russia is extensively intertwined with its geographical and geopolitical location, and an understanding of its past is vital to unlocking the mysteries of the country's politics. The history of Russia between 1922 and 1991 is essentially the history of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This ideologically-based union, established in December 1922 by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, was roughly coterminous with the Russian Empire. The leading political institution of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, administered the country's economy and society.

The history of the Russian Federation is brief, dating back only to the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991. Since gaining its independence, Russia claimed to be the legal successor to the Soviet Union on the international stage. However, Russia has lost its superpower status as it faced serious challenges in its efforts to forge a new post-Soviet political and economic system. After scrapping the Soviet era institutions of centralized planning and state ownership of property, Russia sought to build an economy that incorporated the elements of market capitalism. The

results, however, were often mixed and painful. Even today, Russia shares many continuities of political culture and social structure with its tsarist and Soviet past.

The fall of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union was more than a political event. The powerful interaction and fusion between politics and economics that characterized the state socialist system created a situation that was unique for the successor states of the Soviet Union. The penetration of the Communist regime into every facet of life left the Russian people with few democratic traditions. Russia faces the seemingly impracticable task of economic liberalization and democratization.

### Russia: Public Relations and Democracy

Ideologically, public relations have been historically identified with democracy (Kruckeberg, 1995-96). Golitsinski (2000) noted that “democracy is an essential requirement for the existence of public relations” (p.13). Public relations play a critical role in the free flow of information in democratic societies (Guth, 2000). Toledano (1995) argued that one should “exercise life in a democratic, pluralistic, competitive and open society, in order to appreciate public relations as a characteristic of a democratic system, very different from propaganda, which does not allow competition of ideas, and is not committed to the truth” (p.18). Two-way communication with the public is not important for governmental and business organizations if the public opinion has little power in a country. Golitsinski (2000) noticed that the general public in modern Russia “although allowed to have an opinion of its own and voice it, [it] does not have power to that of the United States and Western European public” (p.14).

According to the Constitution, the Russian Federation is a federal presidential republic. Most experts on the subject about the development of democracy in Russia often have singularly opposed views. Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Russia is more democratic and free

market a country than not and that since the year 2000, despite troubling restrictions on the media and political parties, Russia has become more democratic (Powell, 2004). Gil-Robles (2004), former head of the Council of Europe human rights division, stated that "the fledgling Russian democracy is still, of course, far from perfect, but its existence and its successes cannot be denied" (p.7).

However, with the reference to the Washington Post, "recent trends regrettably point toward a diminishing commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions" in Russia; the president Putin "has weakened checks and balances within the state, diminished political and legal transparency, and made it impossible for independent media, political parties or nongovernmental groups to flourish" (Goldgeier & McFaul, 2006). Hahn (2004) called Russian democracy "stealth authoritarianism or something resembling it" (p.197). The Economist rated Russia as a "hybrid regime", which they consider "some form of democratic government" (Kekic, 2007).

There are certain essential conditions under which the democratic systems can operate. Toledano (1995) noted that "the values of democracy have to be learned and internalized in the country's culture, and it will take years" (p.18). Russia has its own political, economical, and cultural peculiarities. Guth (2000) noted that "Russian public relations is very much like Russia, itself: a product of its past" (p.193). The development of Russian public relations depends in the first place on the development of Russian democracy.

### Academic Public Relations Research in Russia

A professional approach for communication techniques and professional PR agencies began to emerge in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s. Epley said that "the dramatic political changes occurred in the Soviet Union came to a large degree through the increased openness of communication, and recognition of the importance of public relations there" (as cited in Shell,



1991, p.6). According to Clarke (2000), public opinion truly has become a totally new element in Russian society. At present, the PR market in Russia is rather well established: a number of professional PR organizations were founded; 60% of the major accounts are held by approximately 12-15 top agencies (Barannikov, 2004). The Russian Public Relations Association was organized in 1990 “as vanguard advocates” for democratic institutions and the informed public opinion on which these freedoms revolve; within 10 years, the Association has made major progress in facilitating the nation’s transition to its new political and economic systems (Clarke, 2000, p.18). Presently, however, the PR industry in Russia encounters more challenges than opportunities. Tsetsura (2004) noted that public relations in Russia as a science “still struggles to earn its place among the leading areas of study, research, and practice” (p.332).

Pasti (2005) observed that the transitional time of 1990, the new era of freedom, “was not leading to a higher level of professionalism and democracy of media and society” (p.110). The Chechen war, the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict, rise of the oligarchs, centralized political system, corruption, and lack of media democracy “undermined and deteriorated the Russian national image and Western perception of Russia” (Trush, 2006, p. 1). Zassoursky emphasized that the development of the market economy in the field of the mass media is still not very successful because “anti-monopoly laws do not work” and “there is no fair competition” (as cited in Pasti, 2005, p.90). Pasti (2005) said that the former political agitators have been “modernized” into contemporary PR workers (p.110). Golitsinski (2000) agreed that those who used to be at the head of the Communist party became business leaders. Guth (2000) further noted that “the system may have changed with the fall of communism, but the players did not” (p.195).

Tsetsura (2000) observed that some problems and misunderstanding of public relations in Russia were created by the lack of dictionary definitions terms at the introductory stage of public

relations development. The researcher noted that some misleading explanations of public relations goals, presented by Russian scholars in the early 1990s, led different publics to formulate negative images of public relations rather than to understand the true nature of public relations and accept its positive features and aspects.

According to Guth (2000), “the Russians are still trying to figure out exactly what public relations is” (p.195). Referring to Tsetsura, when the first international conference on public relations was held in Moscow in May 1997, “representatives of federal and local governments, leaders of Western and Russian public relations agencies, journalists and editors of national and regional mass media, educators and researchers from Russian and Western institutions of higher education, agreed that public relations is a necessary field for the successful development of modern business and the free market in Russia” (as cited in van Ruler & Vercic, 2004, p.331).

Epley (1992) suggested that public relations practitioners “should be setting the example and encouraging CEOs to extend a helping hand with the ingenuity and expertise that is needed to help keep a peaceful course in this evolution of Russian life” (p.29). The lack of PR education, media bias, rise of business empires, and political battles should be addressed strategically from the communication perspective (Trush, 2006). The lack of understanding of the complex Russian system of political and economic transformation creates “a perception of autocracy and censorship outside the country and is slowly digested by the rest of the world”; “with the opportunities of strategic PR”, Russia can build “a long-term strategy to address communication challenges and be able to frame positive discussions while re-framing the negative” (Trush, 2006, p.4). However, the practice of public relations continues to “professionalize” in Russia, which suggests “a commonality of agreed-upon professional behavior by members of a given profession that tends to unite those professionals into solidarity of ethical beliefs; these beliefs reflect ethical values that

allow practitioners to define themselves as a professional community by defining their relationship with society” (Kruckeberg, 1998, p.47).

Petersone (2004), in her literature review about the status of public relations in Latvia, identified two characteristics that seem applicable to Russia as well. First, the practice of public relations is influenced by the former propaganda tradition. Second, after the Soviet Union collapsed, public relations had to support transformation from a totalitarian regime to democracy and from a centrally directed economy to a free market economy.

### Propagandistic Approach to Public Relations

The first concept of this study is communist propaganda and its effects on contemporary public relations. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party had absolute power over all channels of information. The free exchange of information posed a threat to the Communist Party. Therefore, to maintain the status quo, propaganda was used (Petersone, 2004). Hachten and Scotton (2002) proposed that “the Communist Party manipulated the press to instruct the masses and lead the proletariat” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 31).

McQuail observes that one of the important facets of democracy is free media and that “information and ideas cannot acceptably be monopolized by private individuals” (as cited in Pasti, 2005, p.90). Pasti (2005) also writes that public relations is perceived in Russia as “a propaganda machine for the power elite during elections and other important events” and that public relations in Russia benefits influential groups and people in politics and business (p.89).

Pasti (2005) writes that “professionalism” in Russia “stays within the old matrix of propaganda dressed up as the fashionable genre of PR, borrowed from the West, but executed in its own way” (p.110). According to Toledano (1995), “based on the tradition of propaganda, there is now a wide spread phenomenon which is corruption....public relations practitioners complained

about the greed of journalists. They would not publish a newsworthy, interesting story, unless they were paid for it” (p.18). Pasti (2005) writes that such factors as corruption, self-interest, lies, loyalty to the employer and to private clients “contribute to the economic and political success of media practitioners” that prefer to work “in society without rules” (p.108).

According to Borisov (1991), founding president of the Soviet Public Relations Society (SPRS) and dean and professor at the Moscow State University of International Relations, public relations will be the “agent of change” that will help to transform post-coup Russia from a totalitarian society to a democratic one. Even back in 1991, Borisov wrote that public relations is a cornerstone of every democratic society and that strategic communication facilitates the flow of commerce, “crosses gulfs of ignorance,” “opens untapped areas of development,” and “links diverse cultures” (Shell, 1991, p.6). Borisov (1991) said that “the society molded by propaganda underestimated the role and significance of communications, including PR, as the built-in system of reforms” and that a major reason why the Soviet “hard-liners” failed was because “they mistakenly ignored the power of public opinion” (Shell, p.6). He proposed that public relations is, “a way of thinking ... in a democratic society, as opposed to propaganda under a totalitarian regime” (Shell, p.6).

Russia has experienced the absolute power of the Communist Party for over 70 years. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent development of the field of public relations may indicate that the propagandistic approach to public relations may be present in contemporary Russian Federation. Therefore, the first research question is:

RQ1: How, if at all, does former communist propaganda influence the practice of public relations in Russia?

## Transformation Public Relations in Russia

The second concept of this study is transformation public relations. Petersone (2004) observed that “this concept links public relations and transformation and describes the effects that the two phenomena have on each other” (p.5). Webster’s College Dictionary (2005) defines the term “transformation” as “the process of changing, by the application of certain syntactic rules, an abstract underlying structure into a surface structure”; it “implies a change either in external form or an inner nature” (p.1520). According to Stark (1992), “transformation is a continuously changing process” and is “the introduction of new elements...most typically in combination with adaptation, rearrangement, permutations, and reconfigurations of already existing institutional forms” (p.22).

Guth (2000) found that the global emergence of public relations in Russia is attributed to the end of the Cold War and the downfall of Communism: “The worldwide growth in the practice of public relations has paralleled the end of the Cold War and the globalization of democracy. In places where public opinion has increasing importance in the process of governing, there is a greater need for developing effective communication skills” (p. 192). Therefore, Guth proposed that the collapse of Communist rule and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have resulted in a wave of democratic reforms and a free market economy; the process of transformation is evident in the Russian Federation.

However, Lawniczak, Rydzak, and Trebecki suggested that contemporary public relations in East Europe started with the political and economical transitions (as cited in Petersone, 2004). The Webster’s College Dictionary defines “transition” as “a passing from one condition, form, stage, activity, place, etc. to another” or “the period of such passing” (p.1521). Most often the terms “transformation” and “transition” are used as synonyms when political and economic

changes in East Europe and Russia are analyzed. However, Bryant and Mokrzycki proposed that “transformation” is a more depictive term that has “the emphasis on actual process” (p.4).

Petersone (2004) observed that most scholars who study the political and economic changes in post-communist countries believe that “transition emphasizes destination but falls short of explaining of how changes happened, and it does not reflect any unexpected occurrences during the process” (p.37).

Lawniczak et al. considered public relations “an important and useful instrument that facilitated and accelerated the political and economical transition” and proposed so-called “transition public relations” or “public relations performed in the transition economies”. According to the researchers, the goal of transitional public relations is “to help to introduce and adopt the mechanisms and institutions of the market economy and democracy in former command economies” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 36).

According to Lawniczak (2001) and Petersone (2004), there are six basic goals of public relations during the transition: first, is to secure the acceptance among workers and society at large for necessary restructuring and possible privatization; second, is to secure public acceptance for the concept of private property; third, is to encourage the public to use such “new” market economy institutions as the stock exchange, banks, and national investment funds; fourth, is to help foreign companies to gain public acceptance for their investments; fifth, is to attract potential foreign investors; and, sixth, is to promote the country abroad.

Petersone (2004) noted that Lawniczak’s (2001) description of public relations is asymmetrical because “the information [is] delivered from the government or corporations to the society” and that “transformation” is a more accurate term because “the end state of the changes in

East Europe is unknown” and it has “broader social implications than just political economical changes” (p.38).

After the collapse of the communism, Russia has experienced political, economical, and social transformations. The evidence demonstrates that public relations assisted the country and society to cope with political and economical changes. This is the basis for the second research question:

RQ2: How, if at all, does transformation public relations apply to public relations activities in Russia?

### Models of Public Relations

The third concept of this study is the models of public relations proposed by Grunig and Hunt. They proposed four models of public relations to describe organizational communication activities. These models are: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. The researchers characterized these models as “abstractions and simplifications that help to describe the reality [...] and give insights into the history of formal public relations” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p.17).

Hage (1980) wrote that the four models of public relations seek to analyze the public relations function on the organizational level of analysis and delineate ways the function is performed by organizations as a whole. However, Petersone (2004) noted that “the four models do not reflect a linear, historic development of public relations” (p.17). Grunig (1995) proposed that these four models are representations of the values, goals, and behaviors held or used by organizations when they practice public relations.

The first model of public relations - press agency – was developed in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was explained by Grunig and Hunt as “public relations-like activities” (as cited in

Petersone, 2004, p.17). This model uses persuasion and manipulation to influence an audience to behave as the organization desires. The goal of practitioners of press agency is publicity and propaganda. Grunig et al. (2002) proposed that those practitioners “seek attention for their organization in almost any way possible” (p.308).

The second model – public information – was developed early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century “in response to the attacks of journalists on corporations and government agencies” (Petersone, 2004, p.18). This model uses press releases and other one-way communication techniques to distribute organizational information. Petersone (2004) observed that journalists are hired by organizations and corporations to inform the publics about the organizational actions and activity, and the circulated information is perceived as accurate and is generally favorable to the organization.

McDonald (1998) proposed that organizations that practice press agency and public information models need technicians to implement outward communication from the organization to target publics. Communication staff is not involved in strategic planning and problem solving under these models. Press agency and public information are one-way models. The process is one way; the practitioner is a skilled communicator who is not involved with monitoring the environment but simply provides external communication for decisions made and action taken by others.

The two-way asymmetrical model is the third model of public relations. It was founded on behavioral and social sciences during World War I. This model uses persuasion and manipulation to influence an audience to behave as the organization desires, and it uses research to determine what communication channels and messages are most likely to produce support of an organization's publics without changing the organization. Petersone (2004) noted that practitioners



of the two-way asymmetrical model use research “to learn about attitudes and behaviors of publics in order to manipulate them in a manner that is favorable to the organization” (p.18).

The fourth model identified by Grunig and Hunt (1984) is the two-way symmetrical model. Grunig and Grunig proposed that “the two-way symmetrical model is used by organizations that practice excellent public relations” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 18). Research is used to facilitate understanding and dialogue between the organization and its publics. Petersone (2004) observed that this model “is the most ethical model and enhances organizational effectiveness” (p.18). The two-way symmetrical model uses communication to negotiate with publics, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its public.

The two-way models are concerned with monitoring the organization’s environment and evaluating implementations and impact of communication programs. These two models facilitate communication between management and publics and require practitioners skilled in expert prescription and problem solving process facilitation. Conceptually, roles and functions of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models are similar. However, these models have different goals: in the two-way asymmetrical model practitioners seek environmental domination, whereas in the two-way symmetrical model practitioners seek cooperation (McDonald, 1998). Grunig et al. (1995) noted that “only the two-way symmetrical model is truly symmetrical” (p. 169).

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 employing one-way models (press agency and public information) deliver information from the organization to its publics but do not include feedback from the publics. Practitioners of 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. Grunig et al. (1995) wrote that press agency and public information form “a continuum of craft public relations, which ranges from propaganda (press agency) on one end to journalism (public information) on the other”, whereas the two-way models “make up a continuum of professional public relations, which ranges from persuasion on one end (two-way asymmetrical) to conflict management on the other” (p. 164).

Grunig et al.’ (2002) studies at the University of Maryland suggested three propositions that are based on consistent empirical generalizations from different organizational settings. The first proposition is that manager role enactment is more frequent in organizations practicing the two-way symmetric and asymmetric public relations models.

The second proposition is based on the assumption that manager role enactment is less frequent in organizations practicing the press agency or public information models of public relations. The third proposition is that technician role enactment is more frequent in organizations practicing the press agency and public information models of public relations (McDonald, 1998). The two-way symmetrical model has focused attention towards how to build a normative model of ethical and socially responsible public relations. Consequently, the models have served a valuable function for the PR discipline.

#### Additional Models

Additional models - personal influence and cultural interpreter - have been proposed in the literature. First, the personal influence model was found in India (Sriramesh, 1991). This model is an asymmetrical one, and it often includes unethical practice. The researchers note that this model

can be successful in meeting organizational goals in societies with rigid cultures and authoritarian political systems and they believe this model relates to the personal influence model known as “favor bank” (Grunig et al., 1995). A personal influence model is commonly used in lobbying and media relations where public relations practitioners use interpersonal relationships and connections to facilitate communication (Lawrence & Vasques, 2004). The discovery of the model of personal influence can be interpreted as “the realization that an essential element underlying the original four models was the distinction between interpersonal and mediated forms of communication” (Lawrence & Vasques, p.29). The personal influence model is used by public relations practitioners in Taiwan, Greece, and the United States (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995).

Second, the cultural interpreter model was discovered in Greece (Lyra, 1991). Grunig et al. (1995) suggested that this model generally exists in multinational companies and in organizations that do business in another country, and requires someone who understands the language, culture, custom, and political system of the host country. Grunig et al. (1995) also proposes that the cultural interpreter model may also be found in an organization within a single country that works in an environment with diverse groups. He added that international public relations companies with offices in several different countries typically hire citizens of those countries to staff the firms; likewise, in the United States, foreign companies hire Americans for public relations work. Petersone (2004) noted that “cultural interpreting as a component of the symmetrical model can be used to facilitate the understanding between the organization and its diverse publics” (p.22). Grunig et al. (1995) described the ways this model can be employed to reach the goals of both the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models.

### Critique About the Symmetrical Model of Public Relations

Murphy argued that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is “a normative model” that is nearly impossible in actual practice (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 26). Karlberg (1996) proposed that "the resource-poor segments of the population" are deficient in the communication skills and resources to realize "communicative symmetry" (p. 273). However, the researcher admitted that the two-way symmetrical model "contains valuable insights and prescriptions and is undoubtedly an ethical and responsible step forward" (p. 272).

Van der Meiden noted that the two-way symmetrical model is impractical. The researcher argued that the practice of the model “would imply setting aside the organization’s ‘self-interest’ to accommodate the interests of the publics” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 27).

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). They suggested 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).

### International Applications of the Four Models

After extensive studies of public relations in the countries with Anglo cultures, Grunig et al. (1995) made two primary conclusions. First, the findings of the research can be applied to other countries. Second, most of the conditions that foster public relations in Anglo countries may not exist in other cultures. The researchers proposed a need for a global theory of public relations that describes public relations around the world.

Grunig et al. (1995) conducted metaresearch of three studies of models of public relations in India, Greece, and Taiwan. They concluded that all four models of public relations previously identified in the United States were practiced in those countries; however, the two-way asymmetrical model seemed to be more an ideal, normative model than it was in the United States. The study there confirmed that the global theory and its principles are applicable to public relations in other countries.

Lyra found that all of the models of public relations are practiced in Greece. The researcher concluded that press agency was the dominant model; the communication goals of public relations activities in Greece are publicity, and public relations practitioners in Greece “lacked the skills to conduct research”; therefore, they can not engage in two-way communication with their publics (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p. 28).

Grunig et al. (1996) found that all four models, including the symmetrical model of public relations, are practiced in Slovenia. Two studies - in India and Bulgaria - revealed that publicity models of public relations dominate over two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical; the two-way models are not practiced because of public relations practitioners’ lack of knowledge about ways to conduct research (Karadjov, Kim, & Karavasilev, 2000; Sriramesh, 1991).

According to Huang's study in Taiwan, all four models of public relations are practiced there, but “the use of a model changes after the country's political regime changes” (as cited in Petersone, 2004, p.29). 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 agency 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. 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 suggested 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 Huang (1990) 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 agency 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.

Petersone (2004) added a Latvian perspective to the global theory of public relations. She conducted research to identify the ways that political and economical contexts influence the practice of public relations in Latvia. Petersone identified the factors that facilitate and hinder symmetrical communication and the development of public relations in a society recovering from communism. The researcher proposed that knowledge about those factors can assist public relations practitioners in “improving the effectiveness of their communication programs, save human and monetary resources, and identify the organization’s problems and publics” (p.163). She also found that the press agency and public information models dominate in Latvia, and the two-

way symmetrical model is the least-practiced model in Latvia. Therefore, the study in Latvia was founded on the proposition that public relations theory can be applied globally.

The determination of whether or not any studies have been conducted in Russia is inconclusive. However, the aforementioned evidence of international application of the four models from other countries suggests that the models may be practiced in Russia. Therefore, two research questions pertaining to the four models of public relations were developed:

RQ3: What, if any, model or models of public relations are practiced in Russia?

RQ4: Why do public relations practitioners choose one model over another?

### Dimensions of Public Relations

According to Grunig et al. (2002), the four models of public relations - press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical - describe how diverse organizations practice public relations; however, “a more comprehensive theory that goes beyond the typology represented by the four models” is required (p.348). In order to describe the typology, Grunig et al. proposed four maintenance strategies or dimensions of public relations that underlie the models. These dimensions are symmetry versus asymmetry, one-way versus two-way communication, mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics.

Cancel et al. (1997) agreed that the four models of public relations “began a vague general idea that has stimulated a great deal of attention and positive descriptive research on how public relations is practiced in many types of organizations and in many countries” (p.32). The researchers proposed that the models have served a valuable function for the public relations discipline; however, it was vital to go beyond of placing public relations models into one of the “four boxes” (p. 32). Lawrence and Vasques (2004) agreed that it was essential to develop a

comprehensive theory based on continuous variables that went beyond the typology represented by the four models which is based on discrete variables.

The first dimension is symmetry versus asymmetry or the extent to which collaboration and advocacy characterize public relations strategy or behavior within an organization. The more an organization values collaboration, the more symmetrical are its communication programs.

The second set of variables includes the extent to which public relations is one-way or two-way. This dimension 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 – is used by the organization to communicate with its publics. The organizations that use one-way models such as press agency and public information tend to use mediated communication to reach their communication goals. On the other hand, organizations that practice two-way models are most likely to use interpersonal forms of communication. However, all public relations models can employ both mediated and interpersonal forms communication. For example, a personal influence, which is an additional model identified by Grunig et al. (1995), is characterized by the use of interpersonal relationships and connections to facilitate communication. Grunig et al. (1995) found that those interpersonal connections usually were asymmetrical and manipulative; however, the researchers concluded that those interpersonal relationships could be symmetrical as well.

The fourth dimension is the extent to which public relations practice is ethical. Although Grunig and Grunig (1996) proposed that the two-way symmetrical model is inherently ethical, they



also suggested that other three models can be ethical, depending on the rules used to ensure ethical practice.

Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) described the press agency model as asymmetrical, one-way, unethical, and characterized by mediated communication. The public information model is also asymmetrical, one-way, with most often used mediated form of communication; however, this model was found more ethical than press agency. The two-way asymmetrical model was described as a two-way model that is asymmetrical and that can be practiced both ethically and unethically and it can employ both forms of communication – mediated and interpersonal. The two-way symmetrical model is symmetrical, two-way, ethical, and includes both mediated and interpersonal forms of communication. The four dimensions - symmetry versus asymmetry; one-way versus two-way; mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics - have guided this study by determining what models are employed by public relations practitioners in Russia. Therefore, I propose additional research questions concerning the four dimensions of public relations that characterize the use of public relations models:

RQ5: How, if at all, does the dimension of asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication describe the practice of public relations in Russia?

RQ6: How, if at all, does the dimension of one-way versus two-way communication describe the practice of public relations in Russia?

RQ7: How, if at all, does the dimension of mediated versus interpersonal communication describe the practice of public relations in Russia?

RQ8: How, if at all, does the dimension of ethics describe the practice of public relations in Russia?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Value of Qualitative Research

The purpose of this study is to explore the status of public relations in Russia from the perspective of Russian public relations practitioners. Because the field of public relations has been little studied in Russia, “individual public relations practitioners with unique experiences and direct involvement in the field are the most credible sources” regarding public relations in Russia (Peterson, 2004, p.43). A quantitative approach to public relations in Russia would not have allowed capturing “diversity among people...and how [each human] creates meaning...from a different set of experiences” (Potter, 1996, p.27). Therefore, qualitative interviewing as the research method for this study was chosen.

The qualitative interview is characterized by repeated encounters between the researcher and informants to gain an understanding of the subjects’ perspectives of their experiences or situations, expressed in their own words. Bingham and Moore (1959) described qualitative interviewing as a conversation with a purpose. Qualitative interviewing “is an adventure in learning about teaching in different countries, their cultural views, their problems and solutions, and how their practices are similar and different than our own; it is a process of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.2). Keyton (2006) proposed that qualitative interviewing preserve the form and content of human interaction and explore the complexity of human behavior. According to Potter (1996), the qualitative inquiry provides “an enormously useful variety of means for examining how humans make sense out of their world” (p.12).

## Research Method

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research method was used. Peterson (2004) supposed that qualitative inquiry was the most appropriate approach for assessing this complex and ambiguous subject. She wrote that qualitative method was the most valuable method to generate deeper understanding of how public relations practitioners in Russia “assign meaning to their profession and what this assigned meaning is” (p.43). The method is based on long interviewing.

The interview protocol was arranged regarding the main concepts of the study - the 4 models of public relations, effects of communist propaganda on public relations, and transformation public relations. Telephone interviews were conducted with 10 Russian public relations practitioners at time convenient for them during a 4-week period in August 2007. The participants provided their phone numbers and times when they would be accessible. The procedures involved telephone interview sessions, lasting approximately 90 minutes each, concerning the status of public relations in Russia. The participants granted permission for the interviews to be audio-taped.

## Participants

The group of respondents was composed of Russian public relations experts who were capable of clarifying complex issues concerning the status of public relations in Russia. The participants included both women and men employed by private- and public-sector organizations and public relations agencies. All of the participants were employed as senior public relations managers within their respective organizations at the time of the interviews.

Ten participants were selected for this research. The sample size was based on the recommendations of McCracken (1988), who suggested that a sample size of eight was sufficient for qualitative interviewing because it was essential to work in-depth with fewer participants than

superficially with many. However, following Petersone's (2004) example, two additional participants were added so as to reach what Rubin and Rubin (1995) described as "saturation" - the point at which few new findings are revealed.

The participants for this study were selected based on the combination of the following three sampling strategies: purposive sampling, snowball, and maximum variation. First, according to Keyton (2006), purposive sampling depends on the judgment of the researcher, "who hand-picks the cases to be included in the sample" (p.129). Purposive sampling was used to select two of the participants. These two participants are former classmates of the researcher from Ivanovo State Power Engineering University in Russia. They are among the first practitioners in Russia who have actual formal education in public relations and who have worked in this field for over 4 years at the time of the interviews. In order to minimize a tendency towards bias resulting from affiliation with the same university as these two participants, the researcher incorporated snowball and maximum variation sampling.

Second, snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique that is based on finding participants through referrals. Keyton (2006) wrote that snowball sampling is used when "participants help researchers obtain their sample by identifying other similar participants" (p.128). Using snowball sampling, two other participants for this research were referred by former classmates. Although the referred participants were the colleagues and fellow practitioners of public relations, they did not share the same educational background.

The final selection of participants was based on maximum variation sampling that allows the researcher purposively and non-randomly to select a set of cases which exhibit maximal differences on variables of interest (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The goal of this type of sampling

was to identify and represent practitioners from different organizations and public relations agencies with various experiences in this study.

Initially 13 public relations practitioners were sent an email that included a description of the study and a proposal to participate. A copy of the letter of solicitation is included as Appendix A. Only three of them agreed to participate. None of the remaining replied to explain the reason why they could not participate. Ten more e-mails were sent. Five of them were answered in the affirmative; the participants set a date and time for the interview. One of the respondents refused to participate because of lack of time and professional commitments. Finally, six more emails were sent. Two of them were answered positively. Four others did not respond.

Twenty-nine practitioners were asked to be interviewed. One of the practitioners could not participate because of professional commitments. Ten of them agreed to participate. The remaining did not respond.

### Data Collection

The data for this research were obtained through 18 open-ended questions that were included in the interview protocol (Appendix B). The interview questions were based on Petersone's (2004) interview protocol that was created for her research about the status of public relations in Latvia. The interview protocol was pretested with two public relations practitioners in Russia, and it was adjusted according to the changes suggested by those practitioners. According to the pretests, the question that asked the participants to identify the main goals of public relations during the transformation was eliminated. The question was based on Lawniczak's (2001) classification of public relations goals that was explained in the literature review chapter. The participants were not certain how the practice of public relations corresponded with the goals of

public relations proposed by Lawniczak (2001) and the findings concerning this question were insignificant. Therefore, the question was eliminated.

The protocol was arranged around the three main concepts of the study – effects of communist propaganda on public relations, transformation public relations, and the four models of public relations. In the beginning of each interview the participants were asked to describe their educational and professional background.

The first group of questions explored if and how the propaganda tradition in the past influenced the contemporary practice of public relations in Russia. The participants were asked to explain how they understood the concept of “communist propaganda” and if their professional activities have been affected by the consequences of the former communist propaganda.

The second group of questions surveyed whether public relations has helped society in Russia to transform from totalitarianism to democracy and from the communist command economy to the market economy. Questions regarding how public relations has helped the society deal with social implications that resulted from the transformation were also asked.

The third group of questions about the four models of public relations asked the participants to describe the public relations programs they work with, their organizations’ most important publics, and development of the field since the participants started practicing public relations. The participants were asked to explain what public relations meant to them and with what kind of public relations programs they worked. This group of questions also asked the participants to describe the planning process of public relations programs, the organization’s research activities, and the public relations models that their organization practice most extensively. A handout that describes each of the four models of public relations was sent to the interviewees prior to the interview.

In addition to 18 questions, at the end of each interview participants were asked if there was any additional information that they would care to share concerning the field of public relations in Russia. Their responses provided the basis for the collection of more data for the study.

### Data Analysis

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed, which facilitated the detection of emerging themes within each individual interview and comparison of those themes among the interviews. The data were analyzed according to the three theoretical concepts of this study: four models of public relations; effects of communist propaganda on the field in Russia; and transformation public relations. Data based on the relevance to the theoretical concepts and the research questions were reduced.

During the data analysis, the transcripts were coded. Peterson's (2004) coding process was used, who followed Rubin and Rubin's (1995) procedure: for major coding categories were set; and each word, sentence, or paragraph that belonged to each coding category in the transcribed text was marked. The four major coding categories were, first, effects of communist propaganda on public relations; second, transformation public relations; third, the models of public relations; and, fourth, additional characteristics that described public relations in Russia but did not belong to any other category. The data that belonged to the fourth major category – additional characteristics that described public relations in Russia – were used to supplement the other three categories.

The third major category - the models of public relations - included four subcategories – dimensions of public relations: first, asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication; second, one-way versus two-way communication; third, mediated versus interpersonal communication; and, fourth, ethics.

The coding sheet was based on Peterson's (2004) research about the status of public relations in Latvia (Appendix F). The coding sheet lists the four major categories and subcategories and it helps to see the relatedness of the main categories. The findings of the study were supported by direct quotes from the participants. The quotes used in the final report to document the findings of the study were translated from Russian into English.

### Ethical Considerations

The participation in this study was confidential. This research is presented completely anonymously. The participants' names, the names of their organizations, gender, specific title, affiliations, and communication programs of the participants are not identified throughout this thesis. The researcher understands the obligation to approach the issue of confidentiality with the greatest respect.

The participants were advised in regard to the procedures that were related to data maintenance and reporting of the findings. The procedures involved participating in telephone interviews. With the participants' permission, these interviews were audio-taped. Data are securely stored on the computer hard disc and typed written hard copies that are locked in the student investigator's office. Confirmation was provided to the participants that the data were accessible only to the faculty advisor, Dr. Stephen Marshall, the ETSU Institutional Review Board, and the researcher. According to the Institutional Review Board regulations, after 10 years the data will be destroyed by shredding and by deleting computer files.

In order to ensure that participants understood issues related to confidentiality, they received a copy of an informed consent form (Appendix E). Because the interviews were conducted with Russian participants, the letter of solicitation, the interview protocol, and the



findings of the study were translated from Russian into English. A copy of the consent and the questionnaire were provided in both English and Russian languages.

Participation in this research was voluntary. If a participant decided to quit or refused to participate, the benefits or treatment to which he or she is otherwise entitled would not be affected. If a participant withdrew, the record of his or her participation would be destroyed.

All of the participants received equal treatment. The participants were encouraged to ask any questions related to data maintenance and reporting, my professional and personal background, and the research in general. They have also been invited to contact me after the interview if they had any additional questions about the study and its findings. Since the interviews were conducted, two participants have provided additional information and materials related to this study via e-mail, which is an important source of information that helps me to gain a more complete understanding about the practice of public relations in Russia.

### Reflexivity

Flanagan (1981) proposed that reflexivity complicates all three of the traditional roles that are typically played by a classical science: explanation, prediction, and control. The researcher is aware that qualitative research “aims for subjectivity rather than objectivity” (Keyton, 2006, p.59). The researcher is from Russia; therefore, the study may be influenced by a personal point of view. The researcher concurs with Petersone (2004) that there may be a possibility that “an outsider could see the same phenomena differently”(p.61). However, the researcher believes that the experience of living abroad enabled the perspectives both of an insider and an outsider.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The results obtained from the interviews with 10 participants and the answers to the research questions are discussed in this chapter. The findings are divided into three main sections: first, effects of communist propaganda on public relations; second, transformation public relations; and, third, the models and dimensions of public relations.

The third major category was the models of public relations. This category included a discussion of four subcategories pertaining to the dimensions of public relations: first, asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication; second, one-way versus two-way communication; third, mediated versus interpersonal communication; and, fourth, ethics.

#### Effects of Communist Propaganda on Contemporary Public Relations

The first research question asked to what extent the practice of propaganda in the former communist state had influenced the practice of public relations in contemporary Russia. Eight participants said that communist propaganda had impacted the practice of public relations. Two other participants observed that they had not personally experienced communist propaganda and they answered the question in the negative; however, one of them admitted that many other public relations practitioners with whom the interviewee had worked were of “another, older generation” who were still influenced by the propaganda system and the ideology of the past. Participant F noted:

Soviet propaganda has not rendered strong influence on [the] sphere of public relations of modern Russia. However, many heads of the large domestic companies were brought up by that system and it undoubtedly stirs to normal development PR in Russia.

The interviews with the participants revealed four effects of the communist propaganda on the field of public relations. These effects included continued involvement of communist – trained propagandists; lack of communication and decision-making skills; lack of media independence; and sustained positive image of communist propaganda. Each of these effects is discussed below.

### Continued Involvement of Communist-Trained Propagandists

First, the remaining influence of the old-style communist propaganda on the practice of public relations in contemporary Russia persists because of the existence of people who were a part of the communist propaganda system. A central finding is that there are two types of professional public relations subculture: first, the old generation (practitioners of the Soviet era); second, the new generation (practitioners who have joined the profession after 1990). Participant I described the two generations of contemporary Russian public relations practitioners:

The old generation of public relations practitioners continues to hold a cultivated view on the profession as an important societal task in natural collaboration with those in the authority; they perceive PR as an instrument for the benefit of influential groups and people in politics and business; whereas, the new generation is oriented towards contemporary Western perception about the role of public relations.

Participant H added:

Propaganda had and has influence in modern Russia. There are a lot of people from communist times who are engaged in public relations nowadays. Often they are journalists. Technologically, experts who worked in mass - media then today are effective and demanded. But many of them, for the idealistic reasons, cannot be reconstructed from one regime to another.

Participant A observed that communist-trained propagandists are involved in the field of public relations by teaching communication classes at colleges and higher education institutions in Russia:

Some professors and members of faculty, who were used to teach Communist Theory in colleges and universities in the Soviet Union, nowadays teach public relations. As I remember, our public relations professor in undergraduate school denied any attempt to express my opinion on a subject. We were supposed to know our lectures by heart, but we were not basically allowed to disagree or add any opinion. I do not think my undergraduate degree in public relations has much value. Nowadays, there is a new generation of public relations practitioners. Unfortunately, they are not encouraged to enroll in teaching because of low wages. Most of them prefer working for private business and government. This factor may hinder the growth of the profession in Russia.

#### Lack of Communication and Decision-Making Skills

Second, communist propaganda has affected “the way people communicate and make decisions” (Peterson, 2004, p.95). Participant E, F, G, and I said that the old one-directional speech patterns, such as slogans, were still effective means to deliver a message to some social groups. Participant G recalled some Soviet propaganda slogans such as: “Strength in Unity” and “There are No Irreplaceable People”. The participant G added:

Soviet propaganda had an unachievable goal, and in order to achieve it, personal qualities of each separate person had to be leveled down and erased. People were taught not to think independently; each person was seen as a “gear.” Personal opinion was not important, it had to become collective. The only confirming opinion that was important was the opinion

of communist party. Propaganda has created a lack of decision-making skills, a lack of an ability to think independently and disrespect for each person.

Participant E described a similar phenomenon:

Communist propaganda was based on the feelings of fear, vulnerability, and obligatory punishment. Several generations have absorbed this slavish psychology “with milk of mother.” Therefore, when contemplating public relations programs in Russia, one should consider the consciousness of Russians and their historical peculiarities.

### Lack of Media Independence

The third effect of communist propaganda on the work of public relations practitioners in Russia was a lack of media independence. Participants B, C, and H said that the information must be presented from complete, objective, and multifaceted perspective; however, they used the term “media corruption” to describe their experience. Media corruption can be defined as the use of criminal devices to manipulate or defraud the public. Media corruption involves such activities as fabricating stories, creating fraudulent documents to pass them off as evidentiary facts, “media’s refusal to publish opposing viewpoints about an issue or policy,” “affiliation with political and economical business groups,” and “discontinuation of negative reporting about a business enterprise after the enterprise invests in advertising with the same publication” (Peterson, 2004, p.134).

Participant C indicated that although television and print media are almost totally under government control, the internet is the freest medium of communication today. Participant H described the political function of journalism as “a propaganda instrument for the power elite during elections.” Participant B observed that because their image and reputation depended on

media, they had to “respect” it. Further, Participant B emphasized the importance of personal connections with the media.

Participant E noted that public relations first appeared in Russia in the field of politics in the early 1990s; the political elite, by virtue of historical experience, frequently revert to the use of propaganda as one of the more influential methods of a manipulation of mass consciousness; therefore, public relations concepts and propagation are often substituted for one another.

#### Sustained Positive Image of Communist Propaganda

The fourth effect of former communist propaganda on the contemporary field of public relations in Russia was sustained by the positive image of the propaganda. The participants were asked to define the meaning of “communist propaganda.” Surprisingly, participants A, B, C, D, and H suggested that communist propaganda was an extremely useful tool that contemporary public relations practitioners should learn to use. Participant B noted that propaganda was “quite good.” Participant D said that there are objective advantages of the Soviet propaganda experience that has been rejected as a survival of the Soviet epoch.

Although most of the participants were able to distinguish between propaganda and public relations, one of the interviewees said that both of them represented the same phenomenon. Participant B noted that the practitioners of both communist propaganda and Western public relations use the same information techniques to deliver their messages. The participant noted that ideology may differ, but technology is the same:

To say that methods of communist propaganda differed from methods of capitalist propaganda is ridiculous. In general, technology, forms and the maintenance of propaganda have not changed since the times of ancient Rome. The main difference is that it is easier to operate in authoritative regime by blocking the competing information. In communications

of the business world, to block the information of competitors using lawful methods is practically impossible. In conditions of communistic propagation, it was easier to fight with information channels of competitors.

### Transformation Public Relations

This study examines the development of public relations as a communicative function in transitional Russian Federation. The second research question is how, if at all, transformation public relations applies to public relations activities in Russia. In order to answer this research question, the participants were asked to share their observations about the transformation public relations in Russia and their personal accounts and experiences regarding the matter. The questions pertaining to political, economic, and social changes are discussed below.

### Public Relations and Political Transformation

The first question in this section asked the participant if public relations performed any role in the transformation from totalitarianism to democracy in Russia. Six participants – B, D, E, F, G, and H – expressed the view that public relations did not play any role in the political changes in Russia. These participants said that public relations emanated from the emergence of democratic and economic reforms. Participant E proposed that not only is public relations a characteristic of a democratically developed society but that the existence of democratic institutions in Russia were a necessary precursor to the development of public relations there.

Participant B illustrated this proposition:

Public Relations did not play any role when changes from totalitarianism to democracy occurred. The political change in Russia was an administrative political

decision; whereas, public relations is only a serving function, a tool that did not influence the choice of a new regime. The decision was indisputable.

Although participant G admitted that public relations emerged in Russia as a response to political change, the interviewee interrogatively uttered the word “democracy” and expressed the sentiment that Russia has hardly ever been democratic.

Participants B and D noted that the communication methods initially employed during the beginning of political reforms in the early 1990s were largely based on manipulative techniques, propaganda, distribution of leaflets, influence through mass media, and agitation.

Participants A, C, I, and J considered the development of public relations in Russia in concurrence with the arrival of the new regime. Participant I contemplated this phenomenon by drawing upon the proverbial analogy concerning which appeared first: the chicken or the egg. Participant A underscored the symbiotic relationship between democratic reforms and public relations. Participant J held that the appearance of public relations in post-soviet Russia coincided with the early political transformation and served to help educate the society about democracy.

### Public Relations and Economic Transformation

The second question asked the participant about the economic changes in Russia and the role public relations played in the transformation from a communist command economy to a free market economy. The same participants who previously responded in the negative to the question concerning the role of public relations during the political change - participants B, D, E, F, G, and H - stated that public relations has no merits in the occurrence of the market economy and that people in Russia did not know about public relations at that time.

Participants B and H noted that public relations did not influence the decision to adopt a market economy; however, the development of a free economy was essential in order to foster the



emergence of public relations. Participants D, E, F, and G concurred that the process of economic reforms, followed by free market competition, created a necessity for the profession of public relations; newly privatized companies discovered the necessity of using public relations techniques in order to communicate with their publics and gain market share in a difficult business environment.

Participants A, C, I, and J were not definite about the relationship of public relations and economic transformation but reaffirmed that economic transformation and public relations had developed simultaneously.

While the role of public relations may not have played a significant role during the earliest phase of economic reform, participant C suggested that public relations emerged to be that communicative function that would create a positive image of Russia abroad after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Participant A reasoned that public relations was employed as a means of attracting foreign investments to Russia and to educate foreign companies concerning the domestic situation. Participants B, D, and G proposed that one of the first public relations campaigns took place during the process of privatisation in Russia in the early 1990s.

Participant C observed:

Rapid mass privatization of large companies was an important element of the transition from central planning to a market economy in Russia. However, the reformers who promoted privatization ignored the corruption claiming that any private owner was better than state ownership. People were encouraged to privatize their apartments as well. The failure of privatization was disappointing for the public. Scepticism and materialism coming from economic disorder affected public relations practices.

The interviews revealed that political and economical developments were a necessary precondition for the successful emergence of public relations. Six participants – B, D, E, F, G, and H – said that public relations did not play any role in the political and economic changes in Russia. Participants A, C, I, and J said that public relations occurred in Russia simultaneously with the new regime.

### Public Relations and Social Implications of Transformation

The third question in this section asked the participants if public relations helped the society in Russia to cope with the resultant social implications such as unemployment, loss of retirement and health guarantees, and increasing social and economic inequalities among divergent segments of the population as a result of the transformation. The interview revealed that eight participants - A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I – said that the objective of helping the society to cope with the social negative implications was not realized; public relations was not used in the beginning of the transformation because of both a lack of qualified experts as well as a lack of financial resources.

Participant B noted that public relations campaigns, in reference to social implications in Russia, depended solely upon a company's own initiative and, mostly, public relations practitioners were not compensated for such work, and these campaigns usually are presented as social advertisement. Participant G noted that public relations activities concerning public opinion and social implications were not planned strategically. Participant E said that Russia is still in transition, and it is too soon to talk about the consequences of transformation.

Participant H was the only participant having had personal experience with communication programs that involved social reforms. The participant's company performed a public relations activity to deal with social implications in 1998 during the Default, when the devaluation of the ruble created an economical and social crisis in Russia.

Therefore, the interviews reveal that most of the participants noted that the role of public relations during the time of change, from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned economy to free market economy, was inconsequential in terms of positively influencing the Russian society. The participants also concluded that in the beginning of the transformation public relations activities were not planned nor realized. The need for public relations emerged only on the later stages of transformation.

### Models of Public Relations

This chapter discusses the practice of public relations in Russia through the four models of public relations. The third research question asked what, if any, model or models of public relations are practiced in Russia. The interviews with 10 participants revealed that all four models of public relations - press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical – were employed by Russian public relations practitioners. Public information and two-way asymmetrical models dominated. The two-way symmetrical model was the least used by the participants. Therefore, asymmetrical communication models dominated over symmetrical communication ones.

The four dimensions - symmetry versus asymmetry, one-way versus two-way, mediated versus interpersonal communication, and ethics - have guided this study by determining what models are employed by public relations practitioners in Russia. The results obtained from the interviews and the research questions concerning the dimensions of public relations are discussed below.

### Dimension of Symmetrical Versus Asymmetrical Communication

The first dimension is symmetry versus asymmetry or the extent to which collaboration and advocacy characterize public relations strategy or behavior within an organization. The more an organization values collaboration the more symmetrical are its communication programs. The fifth research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of asymmetrical versus symmetrical communication described the practice of public relations in Russia.

The interviews with 10 participants revealed that asymmetrical communication with the public dominated in Russia. Eight participants - B, C, D, E, F, H, I, and J - engaged in asymmetrical communication with their publics. Participants B, D, E, F, H, and I described communication activities that were only asymmetrical; whereas, participants C and J used both symmetrical and asymmetrical forms of communication. Participants A and G employed the fourth model, two-way symmetrical, in their public relations activities.

Participants B, C, D, and E said that producing and managing public opinion and publicity were the main goals of their communication programs. Participant I proposed that the goal of their organization was to inform their publics about the organization and its publics. Participants C, D, F, J, and I noted that information campaigns were a necessary part of the organization's communication goals. Participants B, C, H, E, and J's descriptions of public relations planning process corresponded with asymmetrical communication process where only the needs and goals of the company were considered. Interviews with the participants B, C, H, E, and J revealed that they conducted research to learn what needs to be communicated to the publics in order to change its opinion and to produce support of an organization's publics without changing the organization.

The interviews with the participant A and G revealed that those participants employed the two-way symmetrical model in their public relations activities. These participants were affiliated with public-sector organizations, whereas the rest of the participants practiced public relations for business organizations. Participants A, C, G, and J said that the purpose of communications is to encourage multiple parties within and outside the organization to participate in decision – making process and to improve communication between the organization and its publics through open exchange of information. Participants also conducted research to learn about the ways to improve communication between the organization and its publics.

### Communication Goals

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 (Peterson, 2004).

The participants demonstrated both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication goals. First, participants B, C, D, and E said that producing and management public opinion and publicity were one of the goals of their communication programs; therefore, the interviews showed that the press agency model was employed.

Second, the communication goal of informing the public corresponded with the public information model. Participants C, D, F, J, and I proposed that information campaigns were a necessary part of the organization's communication goals. The public information model was used in such activities as producing and distributing newsletters, writing information and analytical texts for the media, and producing media information campaigns.

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”

(Peterson, 2004, p. 82). Participants E and J noted that the two-way asymmetrical model was used during fundraising programs; participant B, C, and H said that this model was often used in producing governmental public relations campaigns and legislation lobbying. 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 the publics.

Fourth, participants A, G, and J proposed communication goals that demonstrated the use of the two-way symmetrical model. The symmetrical activities included organizing industry seminars, business conferences, and dealers meetings; organizing conferences and seminars for professional communities; monitoring the company's website and on-line forum in order to identify the issues and problems essential to the publics; producing consumer oriented campaigns; and evaluation of media effects and company exposure. 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.

#### Planning of Public Relations Programs and the Value of Research

In addition to the communication goals of the organization, the planning process and research activities suggested conclusions about the participants' choice of the models of public relations. As observed in the literature review, strategic planning and research are not employed by the public relations practitioners under press agency and public information models. Participant F noted: "The independent planning of PR activities does not exist in our company. On a regular basis there is only clarification of arising information occasions". Therefore, in the framework of planning and research, the two-way models are discussed in this section.

## Public Relations Planning

The planning process of asymmetrical communication programs differs from the planning process of symmetrical communication programs. The two-way asymmetrical model is used when planning involves only the interests of the organization, and “the practitioners seek environmental domination” (McDonald, 1998). Participants B, C, H, E, and J described a process of planning public relation programs as five stages: setting goals, identifying objectives, recognizing communication channels, defining action steps to reach their goals and objectives, and monitoring press to learn about the accomplishment of the program. Participant E noted: “Planning includes detailed gathering comprehensive information about the audience and the client, the analysis (the reasons, motives, and possible consequences), a stage-by-stage plan of action, and consecutive realization of the plan with the mandatory analysis of each stage”. Participant H also added that the finance planning and public relations budgeting were an important part of the planning process as well.

The planning process of symmetrical communication programs requires cooperation with the external publics. For participants A and G symmetry in public relations meant encouraging multiple parties within and outside the organization to participate in decision-making process, especially in corporate strategic planning. Participants A and J emphasized the value and necessity of research activities. The participants summarized the planning process as follows: first, the client cooperates with managers to outline a brief; second, members of the account team under the board of directors supervision, together with analysts, business development experts, and other experienced staffers develop a general concept of the future campaign; third, the concept is submitted to the client for further approval; and fourth, in case the client likes the proposal, a team of managers and their assistants start the account implementation.

### Public Relations Research

Research is used by the one-way asymmetrical model practitioners to determine what messages are most likely to produce support of an organization's publics without changing the organization. Participants B, C, H, E, and J noted that the desk research was the most often type of research used. This type of research is conducted from libraries, online databases, and the internet, and it involves gathering the findings of previously published data and analyzing them in new ways. Participant H said that research was important in order to understand the methods the public relations program could be realized and also to identify the relationship with the potential investor and the client.

The participants who conduct research in order to learn about the ways to improve communication between the organization and its publics practiced the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. Participant A and J described emphasized the value of the focus groups and in-depth research in their practice. Participants A and G emphasized that their organizations conduct research activities before, after, and throughout the public relations campaign: qualitative interviewing and focus groups in the beginning of the campaign, focus groups with different samples throughout the campaign, and in-depth research after the campaign.

### Dimension of One-Way Versus Two-Way Communication

The second set of variables includes the variable that distinguishes between one-way and two-way models. This dimension 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. Practitioners of one-way models (press agency and public information) deliver information from the organization to its publics but do not include feedback from the publics. Practitioners of two-



way models facilitate the exchange of information between the organization and its publics (Grunig, 1984).

The sixth research question asked the participants how, if at all, the dimension of one-way versus two-way communication described the practice of public relations in Russia. 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, and relationship maintenance with the organization’s publics, and exchange of information between the organization and its publics” (Peterson, 2004, p.128).

The interviews revealed that all of the participants engaged in both one-way and two-way communication; however, participants C and J employed two-way communication with their publics more often than other participants. Participants A and G were affiliated with higher education and hospital relationships that allowed them to employ two-way communication with their publics. The presence of research activities led to the conclusion that the models involving two-way communication were practiced. Participants A, G, and J said that it was necessary to conduct research in order to identify the expectations of the publics, to design public relations programs to appeal to these expectations, and to learn about the ways to improve communication between the organization and its publics.

Participants B, C, D, and E described one-way activities that included publicizing the organization and creating a positive image for the organization which corresponded with the press agency model of public relations. Participants D, F, and I conducted one-way communication through information campaigns which characterize the public information model of public relations.

### Dimension of Mediated Versus Interpersonal Communication

The third dimension describes what form of communication – mediated versus interpersonal – is used by the organization to communicate with its publics. The organizations that use one-way models such as press agency and public information tend to use mediated communication to reach their communication goals. On the other hand, organizations that practice two-way models are most likely to use interpersonal forms of communication. However, all public relations models can employ both mediated and interpersonal forms communication. For example, a personal influence, which is an additional model identified by Grunig et al. (1995), is characterized by the use of interpersonal relationships and connections to facilitate communication.

The seventh research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of mediated versus interpersonal communication described the practice of public relations in Russia. The interviews revealed that both mediated and interpersonal forms communication were employed by the practitioners to deliver the organizations' messages to their publics. Eight participants - B, C, D, E, F, H, I, and J – employed the mass media to communicate with their publics and reach their communication goals. Participants B, D, and E said that media relations was the dominant public relations activity in Russia. Participants C, D, F, J, and I noted that the mass media as one of the most essential publics of their organization; whereas, participants B, H, and E found that the media was a channel through which the organization reached its target publics.

In addition to mediated communication, all the interviewees also described activities that involved interpersonal communication with their publics. All 10 participants engaged in interpersonal communication with their publics. Interpersonal communication was used by the practitioners to build relationships with other organizations to determine common problems and

build partnership. Referring to participants A, C, and J, interpersonal communication was also used to engage students from local universities to have internships and conduct research at their organizations.

Therefore, interpersonal communication activities were performed to reach both asymmetrical and symmetrical communication goals of the organization.

### Dimension of Ethics

The fourth dimension is the extent to which public relations practice is ethical. Although Grunig and Grunig (1996) proposed that the two-way symmetrical model is inherently ethical, they also suggested that other three models can be ethical, depending on the rules used to ensure ethical practice.

The eighth research question asked how, if at all, the dimension of ethics described the practice of public relations in Russia. Interviews with six participants – C, E, G, H, I, and J revealed the issue of unethical behavior on the part of public relations practitioners. Participants C, H, and J observed that some mass media organizations and public relations agencies have the same owners, and these alliances often represent definite political and economic groups. Participant J also observed that the coalitions between public relations and influence groups are often used to discredit the opponent parties. This unethical practice is also described by scholars as “black PR”. Participant E noted that it is often hard to balance the role as advocate for the client with their role as social conscience.

Participant H was concerned about a lack of discussion about ethics among public relations practitioners. Participants E and I noted that their organizations were not engaged in any educational activities for public relations practitioners facilitated by professional associations. The interviewee said that professional associations should expand their activities and increase the status

of the profession among the practitioners and students. Furthermore, the status of public relations was low among the practitioners themselves, and the reputation of the field among both practitioners and their clients was viewed as inherently unethical. This perception of the field of public relations has hindered the practice of two-way symmetrical model.

### Additional Models of Public Relations

The participants were also asked if the personal influence or the cultural interpreter models would describe the practice of public relations in Russia. The findings suggest that the Russian model of public relations is a mix of conventional communication relations and personal influence. Russian public relations can be characterized by a significant dependence on personal invitations, telephone contacts, and other informal relational methods for conducting and evaluating public relations. Participant J agreed that relationships based on personal contacts and financial interest is widespread among Russian public relations practitioners and businesses. Participant H noted that Russia is “a highly – corrupted country and the ‘bank of favors’ is a common thing”. According to Grunig et al. (1995), personal influence techniques can 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.

### Choosing Models of Public Relations

The fourth research question asked why public relations practitioners in Russia choose one model over another. The reasons for these choices are discussed in this section. According to the data collected, this section consists of two parts that answer the research question. The educational and professional backgrounds of the participants are analyzed in the first part. The second part discusses the low professional standards and a lack of technological advancement.

### Backgrounds of Public Relations Practitioners

The educational and professional background of the participants is the first important factor that might have determined the dominance of the chosen models. The demographics table of the participants is offered in Appendix C. First, the interviews revealed that most of the participants learned about public relations through professional education institutions. Six of the 10 participants – A, D, E, F, I, and J – earned a formal higher education in public relations. Participants A and D earned graduate degrees in public relations. Participants B and C earned undergraduate degrees in journalism, participant G was majoring in psychology, and participant H earned an undergraduate degree in economics. Participants B, C, and H noted that they had internships in public relations in the United States.

Second, the professional background might also have affected the choice of the models of public relations. Grunig (1992) concluded that organizations with authoritarian cultures tend to employ asymmetrical communication, whereas organizations with participative cultures engage in symmetrical communication. The participants B, C, and H have worked in the field of journalism. Journalistic background supposes engagement “in one-directional dissemination of information” (Peterson, 2004, p. 88). According to the data obtained from the interviews, both participants A and G employ the fourth model, two-way symmetrical, in their public relations activities. The nature of the companies for whom these participants work– higher education and hospital relationships – necessitate the use of this particular model.

### Lack of Professional Standards and Technology

The reasons that the participants choose asymmetrical communication over symmetrical was described by the participants as: a lack of communication technology, low corporate culture, and managerial styles employed by the organizations’ clients. Participant E noted that his-her

company has no capability to use two-way communication models, but the participant hoped that this problem could be changed when his-her company develops a website that they can monitor in order to learn about the issues important to their public.

Participants C, D, and E related the choice of asymmetrical models of public relations to low professional standards and a lack of understanding about public relations procedures among the organization's clients. Participant C emphasized the importance of education about the profession among people: "In many Russian companies professional communication does not exist; they are still on the market-place level". Participant E agreed that many clients view public relations as a manipulative technique that is inherently unethical; many companies that apply for public relations seek for "magic stick" that would assist in business competition. Participant G observed that professional training is required on every managerial level in most companies. Participant H observed: "All kind of organizations need public relations; however only large, financially strong corporations, whose well being does not depend on the local market, are able to pay for it. The problem is that the quality of supply does not meet the level of demand".

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the summary of findings and the implications for the practice and theory of public relations. It also describes the strengths and weaknesses of this study and gives suggestions for future research.

#### Effects of Communist Propaganda on Contemporary Public Relations

The study reveals that all of the participants, with one exception, said that public relations was not practiced in Russia prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The lone exception held that public relations methods were not dissimilar to propaganda methods and noted that unethical unlawful techniques may also be employed by public relations practitioners in order to “block the competitor’s information” and achieve the goals of propaganda.

The observations of the nine participants who responded that public relations was not practiced in soviet Russia correspond with the findings of three groups of researchers who studied the status of public relations in other post-soviet countries – Slovenia (Vercic et al., 1996), Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000), and Latvia (Petersone, 2004). These groups of researchers concluded that “although propaganda was employed to deliver messages from the Communist Party to the masses, a free exchange of information between the state and the society did not exist” (Petersone, p.132). According to Vercic et al., propaganda did not value communication; the primary goal of propaganda was to “dissolve communication between people in order to disable their ability to form publics” (p.42). Karadjov et al. made a conclusion that society in soviet Bulgaria was not familiar with such concepts as “alternative thinking” and “public discussion”; therefore, an open exchange of information could not take place (as cited in Petersone, p.132).

Petersone found that the terms “dialogue” and “cooperation” were new concepts for the post communism Latvian society (p.95).

This study concerning the status of public relations in Russia reveals that communist propaganda has affected the way public relations is practiced in the country. Four main effects are found.

#### Continued Involvement of Communist-Trained Propagandists

The first effect of communist propaganda on contemporary field of public relations is the continued involvement of communist-trained propagandists in the decision-making positions of some organizations. Guth (2000), Hiebert (1994), Karadjov et al. (2000), and others found that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country lacked educated and professional public relations practitioners. Petersone (2004) concluded that “the vacuum was filled by former propaganda disseminators” (p.133). The study further reveals that these communist-trained propagandists influence the work of public relations practitioners by withholding and manipulating information.

#### Lack of Communication and Decision-Making Skills

Second, there is a lack of communication and decision-making skills in post-soviet Russia. The interviews with 10 participants revealed that the old one-directional speech patterns, such as slogans, continue to be an effective means of delivering messages to some social groups in Russia. Communist propaganda created a lack of decision-making skills, a lack of an ability to think independently, and disrespect for the individual person. Therefore, when contemplating public relations programs in Russia, one should take into consideration the uniqueness of Russians and their historical peculiarities.



### Lack of Media Independence

The third effect of communist propaganda is the lack of media independence. Three participants used the term “media corruption” in order to characterize this phenomenon. Media corruption involves such activities as fabricating stories, creating fraudulent documents to be passed off as evidentiary facts, affiliation with political and economical business groups, and other manipulative techniques and activities. One participant emphasized the importance of personal connections and informal relationships with the media because of media’s significant role and power on reputation, image, and publicity. The importance of media relations was also found in three other post-soviet countries: Latvia (Petersone, 2004), Bulgaria (Karadjov et al., 2000), and Poland (Trebecki, 2001).

### Sustained Positive Image of Communist Propaganda

The fourth effect of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations is the sustained positive image of communist propaganda. Five participants found the methods of propaganda are useful in the public relations field. They expressed their respect to the high effectiveness of the soviet propaganda.

Although most of the participants distinguished between propaganda and public relations, one of the interviewees said that both of them represented the same phenomenon. The participant said that in conditions of communistic propaganda, it was easier to fight with information channels of competitors, whereas in business communication, it is almost impossible to block information of competitors using lawful methods.

### Transformation and the Role of Public Relations

The previous part of this chapter on the effects of communist propaganda on contemporary public relations reveals that public relations was not practiced in soviet Russia and that public relations emanated from the emergence of democratic and economic reforms. Correspondingly to Trebecki's (2001) findings in Poland and Petersone's (2004) study in Latvia, political and economical developments were a necessary condition for public relations to emerge.

However, most of the participants said that the objective of helping the society to assimilate from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned communist economy to free market economy was not realized; public relations was not used during the early stages of the transformation because of the lack of both qualified experts and financial recourses.

### Political and Economical Transformation

Although, according to the participants, public relations emerged to be that communicative function that would create a positive image of Russia, attract foreign investments to the country, and educate foreign companies concerning the domestic situation, the interviews revealed that most of the interviewees proposed that public relations did not play any role in the political changes in Russia. Participant B illustrated this proposition: "The political change in Russia was an administrative political decision; whereas, public relations is only a serving function, a tool that did not influence the choice of a new regime. The decision was indisputable". Participants B and D also noted that the communication methods initially employed during the beginning of political reforms in the early 1990s were largely based on manipulative techniques, propaganda, distribution of leaflets, influence through mass media, and agitation.

Most of the participants also stated that public relations had no merits in the occurrence of the market economy, either. Participants B and H said that public relations did not influence the

decision to adopt a market economy; however, the development of a free economy was essential in order to foster the emergence of public relations. Participants B, D, and G proposed that one of the first public relations campaigns took place during the process of privatisation in Russia in the early 1990s. Participant C observed: “Rapid mass privatization of large companies was an important element of the transition from central planning to a market economy in Russia. However, the reformers who promoted privatization ignored the corruption claiming that any private owner was better than state ownership. Scepticism and materialism coming from economic disorder affected public relations practices.”

### Social Implications of Transformation

According to Cox and Mason (1999), the post-soviet countries experienced alteration in their social structures. Petersone (2004) observed that negative social consequences may be caused by political and economic changes. These negative implications may include unemployment, loss of retirement and health guarantees, and increasing social and economic inequalities among divergent segments of the population.

As the study revealed, the role of public relations during the time of change, from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned economy to free market economy, was inconsequential in terms of positively influencing the Russian society. Public relations programs concerning public opinion and social implications were not planned strategically; the need for public relations emerged only on the later stages of transformation.

### Models of Public Relations

This study reveals that Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of public relations – press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical – are employed by

Russian public relations practitioners. Public information and two-way asymmetrical models dominated. The interviews revealed that the press agency model is practiced in Russia; however, this model is employed less frequently and it is often used in a mix with the public information and two-way asymmetrical models. The interviews with eight of the participants demonstrated that each participant engages in communication activities that characterize several models. The two-way model is the least-practiced model; however, the interviews with two participants demonstrated that the two-way symmetrical model dominates in the public sector organizations.

The participants demonstrated both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication goals. Four participants - B, C, D, and E - said that producing and management public opinion and publicity were one of the goals of their communication programs; therefore, the interviews showed that the press agency model was employed. Five participants - C, D, F, J, and I - proposed communication goals that corresponded with the public information model.

The two-way asymmetrical model was employed by five participants - B, C, H, J, and E - who proposed that designing the organization's message to appeal to the expectations of the publics was one of the organization's goals. Their descriptions of public relations planning process also corresponded with asymmetrical communication process where only the needs and goals of the company were considered. Three participants - A, G, and J - employed the two-way symmetrical model of public relations which included improving communication between the organization and its publics through open exchange of information.

The participants were also asked if the additional models of public relations would describe the practice of public relations in Russia. The findings suggest that the Russian model of public relations is a mix of conventional communication relations and personal influence and that Russian

public relations can be characterized by a significant dependence on personal contacts and informal communication.

### Implications of the Study on Theory and Practice of Public Relations

This study provides several theoretical and practical implications for the theory of public relations and communications. Theoretical implications include two suggestions discussed below.

First, this study adds a Russian dimension to the global theory of public relations and provides characteristics about the development and practice of public relations in a society recuperating from a communist regime. This study explores the history and status of public relations in Russia from the perspective of Russian public relations practitioners and presents their views, concerns, and observations.

Second, this study takes an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of public relations and contributes to other disciplines such as political science, intercultural communication, and social development to explain the process of transformation in Russia. The findings of this study may benefit future researchers desiring to explore public relations in other countries that have undergone similar radical transformations.

Practical implications for the theory of public relations and communications are suggested. First, this study discovers that such factors as communist propaganda and national transformation have affected the manner in which public relations is practiced in Russia. Knowledge about these factors may assist both local and international public relations practitioners to improve the effectiveness of their public relations programs in post-soviet Russia. Second, political, economical, and social changes are still taking place in Russia. The findings of this study may be helpful for Russian public relations practitioners to evaluate their communication techniques and

develop communication programs that would engage the organization and its publics in symmetrical communication about these changes.

#### Strengths of the Study

The first strength of this study is the chosen method - qualitative interviewing. Qualitative method is the most appropriate approach for assessing this complex and ambiguous subject and is the most valuable method to generate deeper understanding concerning the experiences of public relations practitioners in Russia. The lengthy interviews with 10 participants provide invaluable insight from the personal observations and firsthand accounts of practitioners who are among the pioneers in the field of public relations in Russia.

The second strength of this study is represented by the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the participants that provide the study with various perspectives on the status of public relations in Russia. The participants are affiliated with public relations agencies, private businesses, higher education institutions, and government organizations. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), 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” (p.73).

#### Limitations of the Study

This study does not attempt to describe the totality of the practice of public relations in Russia. 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 10 participants. However, the “saturation point” of the observations of the participants suggests that the study outlines some general common characteristics about the status of public relations in Russia.

This study may be influenced by the researcher's belief that symmetrical communication is the most appropriate and effective model of public relations. However, the similar findings of other researchers in other countries conclude that this study identifies some patterns about public relations in Russia.

The method of this study was telephone interviewing. Evidence from several studies suggests that differences in responses can be expected between telephone and face-to-face interviewing (Bishop, 1988; Leeuw, 1992). The researcher had a concern about an impact of the data collection method on data quality. However, Jäckle et al. (2006) found no evidence that the presence of the interviewer influenced response quality, either positively or negatively. Unlike previous studies, the researchers found no support for the hypothesis that telephone respondents were more likely to satisfice, which means to accept a choice or judgment as one that is good enough, one that satisfies (Reber, 1995). However, they did find telephone respondents were more likely to give socially desirable responses across a range of indicators.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

Sometimes Russia is called a country with an unpredictable future; sometimes it is called a country with an unpredictable past. There is a saying that no matter what one says about Russia, it will be true. The implication is that even contradictory statements and predictions about the future of the country and the field of public relations are able to find some degree of justification in the very complex reality of Russia in the future.

This study identifies several characteristics that describe the practice of public relations in Russia and raises a number of questions that would benefit from further research. First, a similar study, but quantitative in nature, based on the current findings would impart a more extensive analysis and would permit generalization related to the overall development of public relations in

Russia. This would provide more detailed information about the nature of the field from the perspective of political system, social culture, and historical events to be collected.

Second, separate studies concerning the status of public relations in East Europe and the post-communist countries (Karadjov et al., 2000; Lawniczak, 2001; Petersone, 2004; Trebecki, 2001, etc.) should be looked at mutually as a comparative study that would contribute to the global theory of public relations.

Third, during the interviews the question about geographical locations of major public relations companies in Russia emerged. Apparently, most of the key public relations agencies and companies are shared between the two principal cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Another study examining the coverage and nature of activities in other regions may add other aspects to the study about public relations in Russia.

Fourth, a study describing educational programs in communication in Russia would contribute to the growth of the field and to professional standards.

Fifth, this study describes the experiences of participants up through the year 2007. Future developments resulting from transformation may challenge the current observations and add new aspects to the practice of public relations in Russia.

Finally, this study reveals that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models of public relations – press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical – are used by Russian public relations practitioners. It is essential to understand that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) theory is only one of the many approach studies in public relations. A comprehensive study pertaining to other models of public relations including a co-creational perspective, community-based approach by Stark and Kruckeberg (1988), relationship-building approach, communication channels approach by Taylor and Botan (2006), global public relations framework by Sriramesh



and Vercic (2003), European theoretical framework by van Ruler and Vercic (2004), would be advantageous.

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## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX A

#### Letter of Solicitation

Dear Ms. / Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Inga Ragozina. I am a master's student at East Tennessee State University. Currently I am conducting a study about the status of public relations in Russia. 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 explore how public relations is practiced in Russia; 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 a 90-minute telephone interview at time convenient for you between July 8 and August 1.

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 Russia. Please let me know if you are interested to assist me to learn about public relations in Russia. 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,

Inga Ragozina

## 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 Russia. 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

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. 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 Russia?

*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.

## Part II

4. 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?

5. Did public relations perform 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?

6. 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.

7. 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?

8. Does transformation public relations have any other goals in addition to the ones that I asked you about?

### Part III

9. 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?

10. 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?

11. 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?

12. 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 (throughout, or after) you start a new program?

*Probe:* Why do you think research is needed/is not needed?

13. 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?

14. James Grunig identified four models of public relations. [*Email a handout that describes each of the models the interviewee prior to the interview*]. 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.

15. Why do you think your organization/your client organization practices this model or these models most extensively?

16. Why do you think the four models of public relations are or are not applicable to Russia's situation?

17. 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?

18. Can you think of any other models that would describe the practice of public relations in Russia?

*Probe:* What are these models? Please describe them.

*Probe:* Why do you think these models are suitable to Russia's situation?

*Probe:* Why do you think these models describe Russia's national peculiarities?

*Probe:* Why do you think these models are important?

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience with me. Is there anything else that I did not ask you but I should have asked you about the practice of public relations in Russia? 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. Steve Marshall at (423)439-7575 or me at (423) 483-8474.

APPENDIX C

Demographics of the Participants

Participant	Age	Education	Occupation	Geographical Place of work (in Russia)	Experience Of work in PR (years)
A	25	Undergrad in PR Graduate in PR	PR in education and science, PR manager	St. Petersburg	5
B	44	Undergrad in Journalism	PR agency, Business, general director	St. Petersburg	12
C	39	Undergrad in Journalism	Media relations, PR consulting, Branding, general director	Moscow	15
D	26	Undergrad in PR Graduate in PR	PR department in a trade company, PR manager	Ivanovo, St. Petersburg	4
E	25	Undergraduate in PR	PR department in a business company, PR manager	Ivanovo	4
F	29	Undergrad in PR	PR department in an advertisement company, PR manager	St. Petersburg	7
G	46	Undergrad in Psychology	PR department of a hospital	Ekaterinburg	14
H	49	Undergrad in Economics	Public opinion research, media relations, political consulting. General director.	Moscow	16
I	27	Undergrad in PR	PR agency, manager	Pskov	6
J	26	Undergrad in PR	PR agency, account manager	Moscow	5

## APPENDIX D

### 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 E

### Informed Consent Letter

June 28, 2007

Dear Participant:

My name is Inga Ragozina, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my Master's degree in Professional Communication. In order to finish my studies, I need to complete a research project. The name of my research study is The Status of Public Relations in Russia.

The purpose of this study is to learn how public relations is practiced in post-communism Russian Federation. The procedures involve participating in telephone interviews about the status of public relations in Russia that will last approximately 90 minutes each. The interviews will be conducted with ten Russian public relations practitioners. With your permission, these interviews will be audio-taped. The participants will be selected based on the combination of the following three sampling strategies: snowball, purposeful, and maximum variation. Several open-end questions will be asked about the status of public relations in Russia; how, if at all, the former communist propaganda has affected the practice of contemporary public relations in Russia; and how, if at all, public relations has helped Russian society to transform from totalitarianism to democracy and from a planned-command economy to free market economy. The letter of solicitation and the interview protocol are enclosed.

There is minimal to no foreseeable personal risks associated with participation. Also, I understand that the interview is not designed to help me personally but the investigator hopes to learn more about the status of public relations in Russia.

All information collected in the study is confidential, and your 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 ten years before it will be destroyed. Data will be securely stored on floppy discs and typed written hard copies that will be locked in the Student Investigator's office. After ten years the data will be destroyed by shredding and by deleting computer files and disk files.

This research once completed will be presented completely anonymous and confidential. In other words, there will be no way to connect your name with your responses. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB (for non-medical research), DHHS, and personnel particular to this research (Thesis Chair) have access to the study records.

If you do not want to participate in the interview, it will not affect you in any way. There are no alternative procedures except to choose not to participate in the study. Participation in this research personal interview is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or answer any questions. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me at (423) 483-8474. I am working on this project under the supervision of Dr. Steve Marshall. You may reach him at (423) 439-7575. Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6055 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

Sincerely,

Inga Ragozina

## APPENDIX F

### Coding Sheet

#### CATEGORY # 1: Effects of Communist Propaganda

1. Continued Involvement of Communist-Trained Propagandists
2. Lack of Communication and Decision-Making Skills
3. Lack of Media Independence
4. Sustained Positive Image of Communist Propaganda

#### CATEGORY # 2: Transformation Public Relations

1. Public Relations and Political Transformation
2. Public Relations and Economic Transformation
3. Public Relations and Social Implications of Transformation

#### CATEGORY # 3: Models of Public Relations

1. Direction of Communication
2. Communication Goals
3. Planning of public relations programs and the value of research
4. Choosing models of public relations
5. Backgrounds of Public Relations Practitioners
6. Lack of Professional Standards and Technology
7. Additional models of Public Relations
8. Dimensions of Public Relations

## VITA

INGA L. RAGOZINA

Personal Data:                   Date of Birth: April 28, 1983

  Place of Birth: Ivanovo, Russia  
  Marital Status: Married

Education:                       M.A. Communication, East Tennessee State University,  
  Johnson City, TN, 2005-2007

  Specialist in Public Relations (a 5-year degree beyond the  
  Bachelor's degree).Ivanovo State Power Engineering  
  University, Russia, 2000-2005

Experience:                       Graduate Assistantship, Service Programs Resource Center,  
  East Tennessee State University, 2006 – 2007

  Graduate Assistantship, Academic Technology Support  
  Department, East Tennessee State University, 2005 – 2006

  Internship, the PR department, Ivanovo Region Police  
  Department, Russia, 2003-2005

  Internship, PR Department, Plaza Shopping Center, Ivanovo,  
  Russia, 2004